The French in India

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1763 - 18

S. P. SEN

THE FRENCH IN INDIA
1763-1816

By the same Author

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FIRST ESTABLISHMENT AND STRUGGLE

THE FRENCH IN INDIA
1763-1816

By

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PREFACE

The present work is the first attempt to write a comprehensive history of the French in India during the eventful period, 1763 to 1816. The period was less thrilling in dramatic interest than the time of Dupleix, Bussy and Lally, but nonetheless of deep historical interest, since it was during these years that the political destiny of India was slowly but definitely taking a new shape. The year 1763 marked the close of the most dramatic phase of Anglo-French rivalry in India. That rivalry, however, did not end so abruptly but continued for nearly another half a century. It was not till the end of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars that the old dreams of the French faded away, and they accepted as final their position in India settled by the Treaties of 1814-15, a position in which there was no more possibility of a political rivalry with the English. Thus, the principal object of the present work is to carry on the story of Anglo-French rivalry in India from the point where it is generally assumed to have ended to the time when it really came to a final close. But while putting emphasis on the political projects, intrigues and actual military efforts of the French to retrieve their fortunes in India, sufficient attention has also been given to the internal history of the French Settlements, including administration, economic condition, trade and commerce etc., so as to make the work a comprehensive history of the French in India for the period under review, and not merely an account of the later phase of Anglo-French hostilities, like Malleson's *Final French Struggles in India and on the Indian Seas*.

For convenience of treatment the work is broadly divided into four sections. The first deals with the period from the re-establishment of the French in India after the Treaty of 1763 to the outbreak of the Anglo-French war in 1778, leading to the capture of all the French Settlements; the second covers the period of war, from 1778 to 1783; the third traces the course of events from the conclusion of peace to the outbreak of the next war in 1793; and the fourth covers the period of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, which dealt the final blow to French political aspirations in India. To avoid repetitions of well-known events of Indian history during the period under review and constant explanatory references to the policies and actions of the Indian Powers, there has been given at the beginning a fairly long introductory account of the general political situation in India, with particular reference to those Indian Princes with whom the French had some connections. Then comes the first section of the work. It begins with a sketch of the French policy in India, the condition of the French Company and the character of the French administration under Louis XV and Louis XVI, to show that France had neither any earnest will nor adequate resources to retrieve her lost position in India after the Seven Years' War. This account of conditions in France is followed by two Chapters on the internal history of the French Settlements in India from 1765 to 1778 and three on the diplomatic projects of various French agents in India and relations with the country Powers. The second section, consisting of six Chapters, deals with the policy of inaction of the French during the critical first two years of the war, the despatch of an expeditionary force to India in 1781, the brilliant naval actions of de Suffren, the land operations under Duchemin, Hoffelize and Bussy, relations with the country Powers, and the effect in India of the sudden conclusion of peace in Europe. The third section has two Chapters on the tortuous course of Anglo-French negotiations in India for the execution of the Treaty of 1783 and the revival of French trade and commerce after the establishment of a new Company of the East Indies. Then follow two Chapters on the internal history of the French Settlements from 1783 to 1793, and finally a Chapter on French relations with the country Powers during the same period. The fourth section has two Chapters on the Anglo-French conflict in the East during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, resulting in the total extinction of the French power after the capture of the Isles of France and Bourbon. The last Chapter deals with the return of the French to India under the terms of the Treaties of 1814 and 1815, which restored all French possessions, but with such severe limitations as to eliminate the possibility of any further political rivalry with the English.

After giving an outline of the general scheme, it is necessary to add a few words about how far the present work may claim to have covered new ground. It may be observed at the outset that while many scholarly books have been written on the history of the French in India down to 1763, particularly on the twenty years of the most dramatic phase of the Anglo-French conflict in this country, there is not a single work, either in French or in English, dealing with the later period, after 1763. Malleson's book, *Final French Struggles in India and on the Indian Seas,* admirable in its own way, covers only a part of the period and deals mainly with the Anglo-French conflict during 1778 to 1783. There are again very good French biographies of Bussy and de Suffren, giving a detailed account of the same phase of Anglo-French conflict, but a comprehensive history of the French in India during the eventful period from 1763 to 1816 had yet to be written. The present work, based principally on unpublished records, is the first of the kind, dealing with all the different aspects of the history of the French in India from 1763 to 1816,—political, military, administrative, economic and commercial. Thus, for the first time a connected account has been given of French political projects and diplomatic activities at the Courts of the various Indian Princes during the half-century following the Treaty of Paris, 1763. Secondly, the important administrative changes of 1770, 1785 and 1791-93 have been treated in detail for the first time, as also the difficulties faced by the French authorities in India due to lack of finance and more to lack of interest on the part of the Home Government. Thirdly, Anglo-French commercial disputes and French trading activities in India during the period under review have been discussed in full. Another feature of the work that may be mentioned here is the account of the revolutionary movements in the different Settlements, following the news of the Revolution in France. That interesting episode in the history of the French in India is not very well-known, although Madame Labernadie has written a most fascinating book on the subject.

About the period of the war, 1778 to 1783, the present work has covered nearly the same ground as Malleson's *Final French Struggles in India and on the Indian Seas*; but it gives a more detailed account, based on original records, of French naval and land operations and of French relations with the country

Powers than Malleson's book. Besides, many erroneous views of Malleson, Roux and other historians about persons and events have been sought to be corrected in the light of original documents not noticed by them. To give just a few examples. An attempt has been made to explain the conduct of Duchemin and Hoffelize, who have been accused of cowardice and pusillanimity by nearly every historian of the period (except Martineau). The difficulties facing Bussy in 1782-83 have also been brought out clearly to prove that he did not deserve that condemnation which he has generally received from historians. Then again, great care has been taken to describe the delicate relations between the French and Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan, their conflicting interests and lack of good-will and co-operation. That analysis is intended to bring out one of the principal causes of the failure of the French expedition in 1782-83.

The treatment of French policy and activities in the East during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars has not been so detailed as in the earlier sections of the book. The reason is that in 1793 France lost all her possessions in India, and since the present work is concerned mainly with the French in India, French projects and activities outside India are of interest only to the extent that they were connected with the principal theme of our story. Nevertheless, a critical analysis of the Eastern policy of Revolutionary and Napoleonic France and a connected account of French diplomatic, military and naval efforts relating to India have been given as fully as required by the general plan of the present work.

Only a few words need be said here about the sources utilised, as a more detailed account will be found in the *Bibliography* at the end. In writing a history of the French in India I have naturally depended more on French than on English records. It is only on a few aspects of the subject that English records are of any material value, like the Anglo-French war of 1778-83 or French diplomatic activities at the Courts of the Indian Princes injurious to English interests. But for the major part of the work materials could be supplied by French records, mostly unpublished. At the same time I have been careful to avoid giving a mere one-sided account, and wherever English sources are available or throw some light on the subject, I have utilised them to check up or to supplement the account taken from French sources, as will be found particularly in the second section of the work dealing with the war of 1778-83. Where it has not been possible to come to a definite conclusion, I have given both the English and the French versions so as to enable the reader to form his own judgment. In connection with the use of original records, it may be mentioned here that I have relied more on the correspondence, *mémoires* and reports of persons who took an active part in the events narrated than on second-hand information, either contemporary or later. At the same time, in judging the conduct or the motive of an actor in respect of any event I have carefully subjected it, wherever possible, to the criticism of persons not so directly involved.

About the original records, I may state that I made a most exhaustive use of all the French manuscript documents, preserved in the Archives of Pondicherry, about five-sixths of which relate to the period under review. It is a matter of deep regret that all the documents were taken to France at the time of the transfer of the French Settlements to the Indian Union. The Pondicherry records were almost complete for the purpose of reconstructing the history of the French in India from 1763 to 1793. There were only a few major gaps which had to be filled up with the help of documents preserved in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* and the Archives of the Ministries of Colonies, Navy, War and Foreign Affairs in Paris. I have made full use of all the relevant documents preserved in these Archives, as also those in the India Office (Commonwealth Relations Office) in London, so as to make my account as complete as possible. I must acknowledge here my debt of gratitude to Madame Yv. R. Gaebelé, President of the *Société de L'Histoire de L'État de Pondichéry*, to M. Schermack of the *Société des Amis de la Bibliothèque Nationale et des Grandes Bibliothèques de France*, Paris, and to the French Consulate in Calcutta for their kind help in getting copies of records from the Archives of Pondicherry and Paris. I am also thankful to Miss Sujata Ghosh, Mrs. Snigdha Roy and Mr. Pranab Biswas for their kind help in preparing the index.

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S. P. SEN

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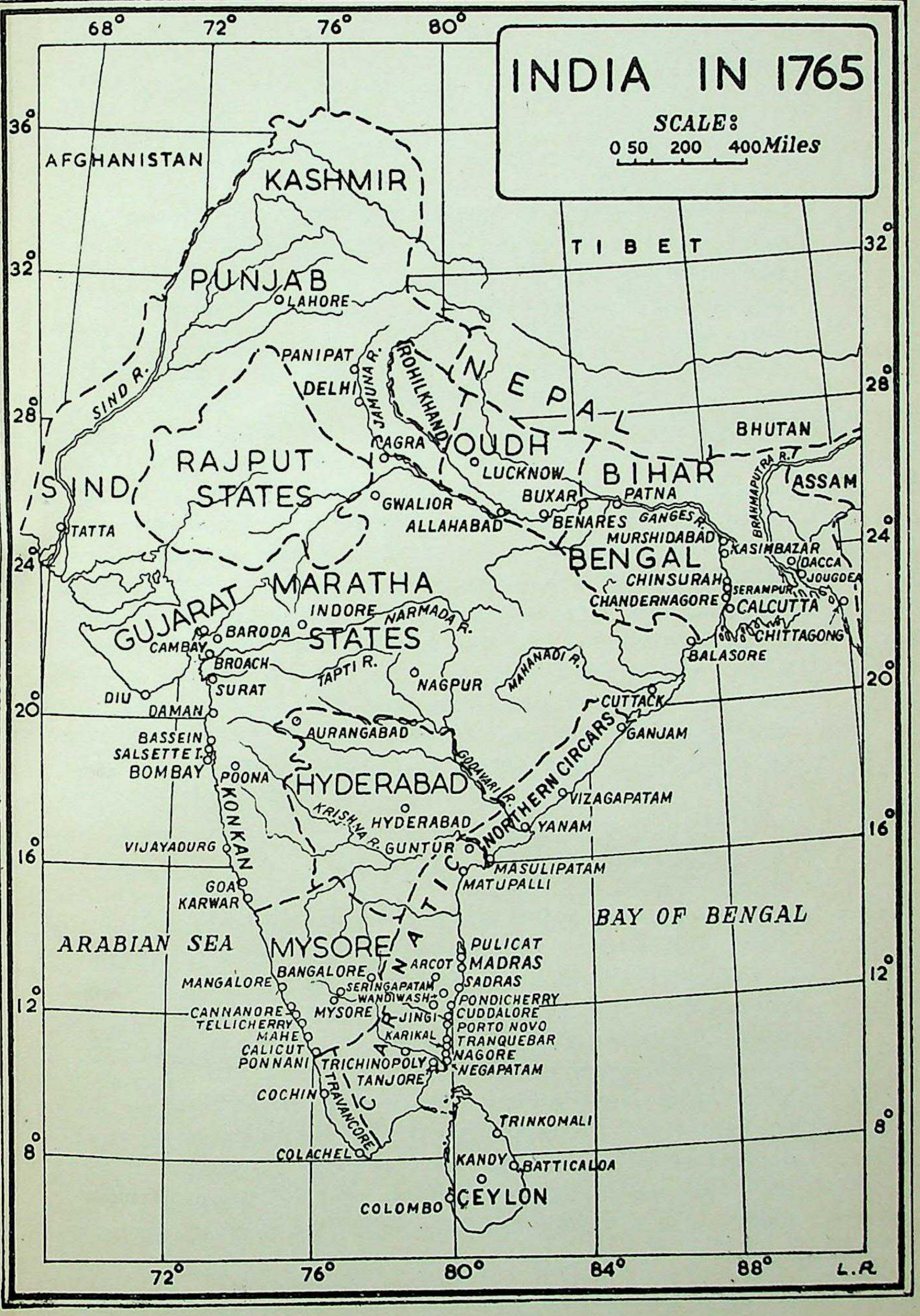
ABBREVIATIONS :

P.A.—Pondicherry Archives.
A.N.—Archives Nationales, Paris.
N.A.—National Archives of India.
B.N.F.Fr.—Bibliothèque Nationale (Paris), Fonds Francais.
B.N.F.Fr.(N.A.)—Bibliothèque Nationale (Paris), Fonds Français, Nouvelles Acquisitions.
C.R.O.—India Office (Commonwealth Relations Office), London.


INDIA IN 1765
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LUCKNOW
BIHAR
PATNA
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BENARES
GANGES R.
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GWALIOR
ALLAHABAD
MURSHIDABAD
KASIMBAZAR
DACCA
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CHINSURAH
SERAMPUR
CHANDERNAGORE
CALCUTTA
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GUJARAT
MARATHA STATES
INDORE
NARMADA R.
BARODA
CAMBAY
BROACH
TAPTI R.
SURAT
NAGPUR
MAHANADI R.
CUTTACK
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DIU
DAMAN
BASSEIN
SALSETTE I.
BOMBAY
AURANGABAD
POONA
HYDERABAD
GODAVARI R.
NORTHERN CIRCARS
VIZAGAPATAM
KONKAN
KRISHNA R.
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PONDICHERRY
CANNANORE
TELLICHERRY
MAHE
CALICUT
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JINGI
CUDDALORE
PORTO NOVO
KARIKAL
TRANQUEBAR
NAGORE
TRICHINOPOLY
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TANJORE
COCHIN
TRAVANCORE
TRINKOMALI
COLACHEL
KANDY
BATTICALOA
COLOMBO
CEYLON
L.R.

by them and holding office at their pleasure. A few months later their position was further strengthened and regularised by the Imperial grant of the *Diwani* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. There followed a few years of dual government, ended by their assumption of full powers of administration under Warren Hastings. At the same time their independent position in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa was signalised by the discontinuance of the payment of 26 lakhs of rupees promised to the Emperor in return for the grant of *Diwani*. Thus the fiction of Mughal suzerainty was torn by the cold logic of facts.

Once entrenched in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, the English were soon led by circumstances to extend their influence even further. The battle of Buxar (1764) put the whole of Oudh at their mercy, but they were prudent enough not to extend their direct control over the country. This apparent self-denial on their part was prompted by two reasons: first, their lack of adequate resources to hold such a vast area; and second, their fear of rousing the hostility of other Indian Powers and uniting them in a common opposition. So by the treaty of 1765 the country was restored to the Nawab, Shuja-ud-daulah, for 50 lakhs of rupees, with the exception of two districts, Kora and Allahabad, which were bestowed on the homeless Emperor, Shah Alam II, in exchange for the grant of *Diwani*. Thus, by a single deal the English regularised their position in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, obtained a grateful ally in the Nawab of Oudh, secured a buffer state to guard their western frontier, and kept the wandering Emperor closely attached to them by giving him a home and deluding hopes, repeated year after year, of restoring him to his ancestral capital. After 1765 the English position in north India remained unassailable, particularly after the impressive demonstration of their military power in the conquest of Rohilkhand (1774), the march of Goddard's army across the sub-continent (1778-79), the capture of the Gwalior Fort (1780) considered impregnable till then, and the decisive defeat inflicted on Sindhia (1781), the only Indian Power who could come near to challenge the English position in the north.

In the south too the English came to acquire increased political and military importance during the period under review. Bombay first came into prominence as a result of the conflicts with the Marathas from 1775 to 1782, and Madras grew in importance and power as a result of successive wars with Mysore between 1767 and 1799. Neither of the southern Presidencies possessed, however, military resources and territorial revenues adequate to sustain them against their formidable Indian adversaries, and they were saved from utter destruction only by the support of the Bengal Government,—military, diplomatic and financial. Indeed, the preservation of the English power in the south during the critical years, 1775 to 1783, was due to the assumption of over-all control and responsibility by the Bengal Government. It ensured unity of action, in spite of grave divergences of opinion as between Bombay and Madras and also as between the two southern Presidencies and Bengal. The concentration of authority with respect to diplomatic relations and military operations was first made by North's Regulating Act of 1773 and further strengthened by Pitt's India Act of 1784. But apart from these two Parliamentary Acts, it was the exigencies of the military situation that placed Bombay and Madras under the control of the Bengal Government.

The thirty years from 1763 to 1793 constituted an eventful period for the two English Presidencies in the south. Bombay made its first territorial acquisitions on the mainland, but what was more important was that it embarked on that policy of intervention in the internal politics of the Maratha Confederacy which was destined to end in the total destruction of that Power. For Madras also the period was clearly indicative of the future. The English had established military control over the Carnatic and assumed responsibility for its defence, while keeping administrative authority in the hands of the Nawab. It gave rise to many difficult problems, the only solution to which lay in tearing off the fiction of the Nawab's independence, as in Bengal, and the assumption of full powers by the real masters. Then again, the acquisition of the Northern Sarkars in 1766 necessitated the establishment of close diplomatic relations with Hyderabad and the promise of English military assistance against all enemies. It was the commencement of a process which was to lead to the Subsidiary Alliance in Wellesley's time and the establishment of effective English control over that state. Finally, it was during these years that the Madras Presidency was considerably enlarged by the acquisition of new territories, mainly at the expense of Mysore. At the end of the period the English emerged as undoubtedly the strongest military Power in the south, as they had become in the north after Plassey and Buxar.

Till 1793 the English had to reckon with not only the Indian Powers but also with the French, who, if not a formidable antagonist, still retained enough capacity for trouble and constituted a potential source of danger. With the final extinction of the French power in 1793, the English found their way clear for a further advance and extension of their political dominion. They had already attained the position of being the strongest power in India. In the closing years of the 18th century they proceeded to carry their work to its logical conclusion, the achievement of full sovereignty over the entire subcontinent. The three Indian Powers who still retained their independence and had some military strength left were liquidated one after another. Hyderabad was induced to enter into a treaty of Subsidiary Alliance (1798) and thereby to barter away its independence for a guarantee of protection against its two powerful neighbours, the Marathas and Mysore. Mysore, which had been dismembered and crippled in 1792, was finally crushed in 1799. Then came the turn of the Marathas. Taking advantage of the internal strife among the Marathas, the English imposed the Treaty of Bassein (1802) on the Peshwa, the nominal head of the Maratha Confederacy. It led inevitably to the second Anglo-Maratha war, which put the English position in India beyond any effective challenge. In north India Sindhia's power was decisively broken, and the Mughal Emperor became a protégé of the English. The English gained indirect control over most of the Maratha states, and although by the political settlement of 1805 they showed a policy of moderation not required by the results of the war, the formidable nature of their military power was clearly brought home to their adversaries. Thus, even before the final extinction of the Maratha power in 1817-18, the English had attained the position of *de facto* sovereign power in India, which received international recognition by the treaties of 1814 and 1815 at the end of the Napoleonic Wars.

The extension of the English power in India in the closing years of the 18th century and the early years of the 19th lay, in a sense, in the inexorable process of history. It was inevitable, once the English had established a decided military superiority over the Indian Powers. But it may be observed that one important motive force for the expansion of the English power to its logical conclusion was the fear of French rivalry, even after 1793 when all the French possessions in India had been captured and the political influence of the French totally eliminated. It was the French menace that precipitated the fall of Tipu. It was again the presence of French military adventurers in the service of Hyderabad and of the Marathas that prompted the English to eliminate that potential source of danger by bringing the two Indian Powers under effective English military control through treaties of Subsidiary Alliance. In that sense it may be said that the French by their potential threat, more imaginary than real, helped the expansion and consolidation of the English power in India.

II. *The Mughal Emperor.*

Among the Indian Powers the premier position was held by the Emperor of Delhi, not because of any real political and military importance but for his shadowy claim of suzerainty over all the other Princes. In reality, the Empire was a mere name and the Emperor reduced to a puppet in the hands of his all-powerful ministers. On the murder of Emperor Alamgir II in 1759 his son Prince Ali Gauhar, then a homeless wandering adventurer, assumed the Imperial title as Shah Alam II. He was not as worthless a person as he turned out to be in later life, but gave some promise of being able to retrieve the Imperial dignity from the depths into which it had fallen. In the earlier part of his career he gave proof of vigour and energy, if not persistent yet remarkable on occasions. As a Prince destined to inherit the throne, he had fled away from the capital to save himself from the tyrant, Firuz Jang, who was ruling the Empire in the name of his father, the puppet Emperor Alamgir II. Friendless and penniless, he wandered from place to place, struggling desperately against adversity and trying to gain allies and collect adventurous bands round him with the object of recovering the eastern provinces of the

Empire from the English. His successive attempts on Patna and a raiding incursion into Bengal were frustrated by the quick moves of the English, but he faced all hardships with courage and cheer. If the Prince had died young, or if he had disappeared completely from the political scene after 1760, his name would have been hallowed with the same romantic glory as that of the Young Pretender in British history. But fate denied him that chance, and he lived to be one of the most despicable figures who ever sat on the throne of Delhi.

Shah Alam II had his first taste of ease and affluence after making his final peace with the English in 1765. But living under their protection at Allahabad, he constantly sighed for the throne of his ancestors and dreamed of restoring the old Imperial authority. For years the English humoured him by promising to restore him to his capital as soon as the rains were over, but in the end he realised that the 'English rains' would never stop and that if he was to return to Delhi he must look to other quarters for help. Just about this time the Marathas, recovering from the terrible shock of Panipat, returned to north India to regain their lost position, and nothing was more natural than that Shah Alam should throw himself into the arms of the southerners in the hope of being at last restored to his ancestral capital. Negotiations were hastily concluded in 1771, and despite the advice of the English and of the pro-English and peace-loving party in the *Darbar* the Emperor set out for his capital, where he was installed in January 1772 with the help of his Maratha allies.

Shah Alam regained the Imperial capital at last, but what a sad inheritance it was! Rebellions and foreign invasions had so completely obliterated all landmarks that it was difficult to recognise any trace of the old Empire. The authority of the Imperial Government was confined to the city of Delhi and its environs, and all around subordinate vassals had raised themselves up as independent potentates. The Nawab of Oudh, the nominal *Wazir* or Chancellor of the Empire, and the Nizam of Hyderabad were too powerful to be disturbed. The eastern provinces, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, had permanently passed into the hands of the English; and even the annual tribute of 26 lakhs of rupees promised by them in 1765 was discontinued after 1770 The Marathas were back in north India to re-establish their authority which had been shattered on the fateful field of Panipat. Then there remained lesser Powers, the Ruhelas and the Sikhs, the Jats and the Rajputs. For the next sixteen years after the return of Shah Alam to his capital, the Imperial Government was engaged in vainly trying to suppress these Powers and to revive a fragment of the old Empire. But in the end all efforts proved fruitless, and far from there being a revival of even a shadow of the old glory, the Imperial authority was prostituted by successive petty tyrants to gain their selfish ends, and the Imperial family was subjected to the grossest insult and cruelty ever recorded in history at the hands of the Ruhela chieftain, Ghulam Qadir. The feeble lamp of the war-torn and desolate Empire would have flickered abruptly in 1788 but for the timely protection given by Mahadaji Sindhia which kept it burning for a few years more. Finally, after the defeat of Sindhia (1803) in the second Anglo-Maratha war the shadowy Emperor passed under English protection and ceased to have any political importance. The Empire of the Mughals came to an unceremonious end as the British Raj became an established fact.

The failure of all attempts to resuscitate the Empire may be attributed to three principal factors: the character of Shah Alam; the chronic financial difficulties; and the want of a suitable leader among the nobles and generals of the Empire, gifted with imagination to plan and vigour to carry it out. In contrast with his earlier career of adventure, after his restoration at Delhi Shah Alam lost himself completely in the pleasures of the harem, and the only initiative he occasionally took in politics was in spinning webs of backstair intrigues which proved entirely futile. It was impossible that the Empire could be revived under such a shadowy figure. The second factor was financial distress. The outlying parts of the Empire had been parcelled out among powerful vassals, who professed allegiance to the Emperor but paid no tribute. Even the crownlands were diverted for the purpose of maintaining the minister in power and his army. The only way of relieving the financial distress was to exact tributes from refractory vassals, but that required a huge initial outlay on military preparations beyond the capacity of the Imperial Government.

The third factor was the depraved character of the nobility of the Empire. Most of them, like Abdul Ahad Khan, belonged to the category of polished courtiers. The only man who towered above the puny figures of the time was Najaf Khan. This Persian adventurer offered the only hope of a partial restoration of the Empire. He was a fine soldier and considerably strengthened the Imperial army by a combination of Mughal cavalry with European-trained infantry battalions. He paid particular attention to the improvement of the artillery and secured the services of European adventurers like Madec, Sombre and Modave, with their well-trained and well-armed contingents. But, unfortunately, Najaf Khan was kept out of effective control of affairs too long by the machinations of his rivals, and when at last he came to power at the end of 1779 it was only for a short period. With his premature death in 1782 vanished all hopes of resuscitating the Empire.

When such was the condition of the Empire, it is not a little surprising at first that the French in their diplomatic plans from 1765 to 1783 should have so much relied upon it as an important factor in the coalition of Indian Powers to be formed against the English. Some of the French agents, like Chevalier, no doubt overrated the military strength of the Empire and the abilities of the men who were in control of its affairs. But at the same time it cannot be overlooked that with all its weakness the Empire could yet have played an important part in the projected coalition against the English, if sustained by French troops and French money. The prestige of the Imperial name was still very high, and the adherence of the Emperor to the coalition would have considerably strengthened the forces arrayed against the English. During the first Anglo-Maratha war the Poona Court made strenuous efforts to gain the co-operation of the Emperor, and the Government of Calcutta in alarm sent a confidential agent, James Browne, to Delhi to counteract the Maratha intrigues. Both sides knew well the value to be attached to the adherence of the Emperor to the projected coalition.

III. *Oudh.*

Besides the Emperor, the only other north Indian Power who deserves some notice here was the Nawab of Oudh, ruling over a vast area from the border of Bihar to the course of the Ganges in the west. During the early part of our period at least, Oudh had not passed so completely under English control as to lose all political importance. This principality, originally subject to the Mughal Emperor, was made virtually independent by the all-powerful *Wazir* or Chancellor of the Empire, Safdar Jang, about the middle of the 18th century. On his death in 1754 he was succeeded by his son, Shuja-ud-daulah, who ruled till 1775. Shuja-ud-daulah also was appointed *Wazir* of the Empire, but for all practical purposes he ruled as an independent Prince, deriving his strength from his own armed forces and the vast territory he had under his direct control. In 1759 he gave some token help to the fugitive Prince Ali Gauhar in his attempt to recover Bengal and Bihar, and in 1763 he not only gave shelter to the expelled Nawab of Bengal, Mir Kasim, but even went to war with the English in his support. The decisive defeat at Buxar in 1764 and the treaty of alliance which followed in 1765 opened a new chapter in the history of Oudh. The principality passed gradually under English control, although the Nawab long retained his independence so far as internal administration was concerned. By the Treaty of Allahabad Shuja-ud-daulah got back all his territories, with the exception of Kora and Allahabad which were given to the Emperor. From the English point of view the arrangement was most politic, particularly when they were not ready to annex Oudh and assume direct responsibility for its defence. It secured the friendship of Shuja-ud-daulah and created a convenient buffer-state to guard their western frontier against sudden invasion.

Till his death in 1775 Shuja-ud-daulah remained true to his connection with the English out of convenience, although for a few years after 1765 French intrigues in north India centred on him as a possible ally for an invasion of Bengal. He had in his service a number of French military adventurers, the most prominent of them being Gentil, whose possible influence on him was dreaded by the English. The supposed danger was finally removed in 1775, when on the death of Shuja-ud-daulah the English exerted effective pressure on his successor, Asaf-ud-daulah, to dismiss all the Frenchmen in his service. Anyway, even the presence of French officers did not materially affect the friendly relations between Shuja-ud-daulah and the English.

By the Treaty of Benares, 1773, Shuja-ud-daulah got back the two lost districts of Kora and Allahabad which the Emperor had wanted to transfer to his Maratha protectors. Shortly after he also received English military assistance for the conquest of the Rohilla country. Under Asaf-ud-daulah the English grip over Oudh was further tightened. Although the Nawab retained full independence in internal administration, he became completely dependent on English military support and was kept under close observation by their agent at his *Darbar*. It was impossible for him to get rid of the English alliance and follow an independent policy; and from this time the principality of Oudh lost all real importance as a factor in north Indian politics.

IV. *The Marathas.*

In the south there were three principal Powers, all jealous of the extension of the English dominion and therefore potential allies for the French,—the Maratha Confederacy, Hyderabad under Nizam Ali and Mysore under Haidar Ali. Of these the most important was the Maratha Confederacy. It was the strongest from the military point of view, and about the middle of the 18th century it even appeared as the Power destined to seize the whole inheritance of the Mughal Empire. But the greatest obstacle to any united and concerted effort on the part of the Marathas was the decline of the authority of the central government and the consequent increase of power of the dependent chiefs. The vigorous and united state built up by Shivaji became partially decentralised not long after his death under the pressure of military necessity, and what controlling and paramount authority there still remained in the hands of the central government was shattered beyond repair in the second half of the 18th century by the disaster of Panipat and the dispute over succession to the Peshwaship which started shortly after. The process of decentralisation went so far that the chiefs of the outlying parts, the Bhonsla, the Gaikwar, the Sindhia and the Holkar, assumed virtually independent authority, till one of them, Mahadaji Sindhia, even overshadowed the central government. That was why although the Maratha Confederacy as a whole represented the strongest military factor in India and would have been the most important ally for the French, a treaty with the Poona Government was of little consequence unless similar terms could be arranged with all the chiefs after overcoming their mutual rivalries and jealousies.

The death of Peshwa Balaji Baji Rao in June 1761, under the shock of the Panipat disaster, opened an unhappy chapter of dispute for the headship of the state, leading ultimately to the ruin of the Maratha power. Balaji Baji Rao's successor, Madhav Rao, being young was placed under the guardianship of his uncle Raghunath Rao. The latter, although personally brave and having military talents, proved to be weak and vacillating in politics and gave the English their first opportunity to exploit the internal divisions of the Marathas. Immediately after the death of Balaji Baji Rao the Nizam decided to attack the Marathas, taking advantage of their military weakness after the Panipat disaster; and although the plan was ultimately abandoned owing to the defection of the Nizam's Maratha troops, the incident was important in history as it was then for the first time that Raghunath Rao turned to the English at Bombay for military assistance, a policy which was destined to prove so fatal to the Maratha power.

Madhav Rao, on coming out of his period of tutelage, proved to be a much abler man than his uncle in directing the affairs of the state, and had he lived long enough he might have been able to retrieve the Maratha fortunes even after the shattering blow at Panipat. His prudence and tact were demonstrated by his conduct towards his erratic uncle, Raghunath Rao, who even took to arms against the Poona Government with the help of Nizam Ali, ever on the alert to exploit Maratha dissensions to his own advantage. Madhav Rao was wise in diplomacy and vigorous in war, and under him the Marathas won a series of victories over Nizam Ali and Haidar Ali as also in northern India. Indeed, the growing power of the Marathas alarmed the Bombay Government so much that in 1767 the latter sent an agent named Mostyn to Poona to report on the state of affairs there and to prevent an alliance of the Marathas with Nizam Ali or Haidar Ali, which could not but be dangerous to the English position in the south. But unfortunately for the Marathas, the career of the young and vigorous Peshwa was cut short in November 1772. The death of Madhav Rao proved more fatal to the Maratha power than the disaster of Panipat, as it immediately opened the floodgates of internal strife and consequent foreign intervention.

Madhav Rao was succeeded by his worthless brother, Narayan Rao. Just before his death Madhav Rao, wanting to guard against internal dissension, had released his uncle, Raghunath Rao, from prison and had entrusted Narayan Rao to his care. But relations between the uncle and the nephew were not happy, and Raghunath Rao was again kept confined in the Peshwa's palace at Poona. The intrigues of Raghunath Rao and his wife bore fruit, and on the 30th August 1773 there broke out a mutiny in the army resulting in the murder of Narayan Rao. Raghunath Rao was next acknowledged as the Peshwa, but his power was short-lived because of the opposition of the old ministers headed by Sakharam Bapu and Nana Phadnavis.

Raghunath Rao's first care as Peshwa was to fight against Nizam Ali and Haidar Ali, both of whom were always on the alert to exploit troubles among the Marathas. Nizam Ali was defeated in battle, but through the misplaced generosity of Raghunath Rao he did not suffer any loss of territory for treachery against his old friend. Raghunath Rao next turned against Haidar Ali, but in the midst of a victorious campaign he was suddenly recalled by the news of the birth of a posthumous son to Narayan Rao, who was at once proclaimed as the Peshwa by the Ministerial party at Poona. Raghunath Rao advanced towards Poona, but although he gained some initial successes over the army of the Ministerial party and might have broken up the opposition by a swift march on the capital, at the most opportune moment he lost his judgment, vacillated and turned north with the hope of gaining the alliance of Sindhia, Holkar and the English of Bombay. While the two powerful Maratha chiefs showed no inclination to help Raghunath Rao, the English readily agreed through their anxiety to acquire Salsette, Bassein and the smaller islands near Bombay.

The Bombay authorities had their eyes on these territories from some time back, and the news that the Portuguese were planning to reconquer them from the Marathas precipitated the conclusion of the Treaty of Surat (March 1775), by which the

English agreed to offer military assistance to Raghunath Rao in exchange for the cession of the coveted territories. It was thus that the English gained their first opportunity to interfere in Maratha politics. The island of Salsette was captured by them in December 1774, even before the conclusion of a definitive treaty with Raghunath Rao, and an army under Col. Keating took the field with instructions to conduct Raghunath Rao to Poona. But in spite of a few initial successes this expedition came to nothing. The Supreme Government in Calcutta, newly appointed under the Act of 1773 with powers of control over the subordinate Presidencies, grew alarmed at the prospect of a prolonged war with the Marathas, ordered Bombay to withdraw its troops immediately, and sent Col. Upton to negotiate a treaty of peace and friendship with the Poona Government. On the 1st March 1776 the Treaty of Purandhar was signed, by which the English gave up the cause of Raghunath Rao but were allowed to retain Salsette.

Relations, however, did not improve between the English and the Marathas. The Bombay Government continued to give shelter to Raghunath Rao and at the same time complained that the Poona Court was putting obstruction in the way of the implementation of the treaty. The thing was that the Bombay Government was most unwilling to give up its policy of territorial acquisition, which was required for the safety of Bombay and security of commerce with the interior of the country. It thus took the earliest opportunity to break the treaty and resume hostilities. Three factors were responsible for this development; first, the approval by the Court of Directors of the policy of the Bombay Government in respect of the Treaty of Surat; second, the appearance of Saint-Lubin at Poona for negotiating a Franco Maratha treaty which alarmed the English greatly; and third, the outbreak of dissension between the leaders of the Poona Government, Sakharam Bapu and Nana Phadnavis. On the overtures of Sakharam Bapu the Bombay Government at once agreed to intervene in Maratha politics and overthrow Nana Phadnavis and his party from power. Hostilities were resumed in November 1778. On this occasion the policy of the Bombay Government was approved by the Supreme Government in Calcutta, and the latter even sent a strong army under Col. Leslie (after his death the command was given to Col. Goddard) to march overland to Bombay, admittedly a daring project, which more than anything else demonstrated to the Indian Powers the military strength of the English.

The expedition sent by the Bombay Government met with a disastrous failure, partly because of the smallness of the force and the mismanagement of the military operations, and partly because of the unexpected support that the Poona Government under Nana Phadnavis got from all the important Maratha chiefs. In January 1779 the English were forced to a humiliating treaty at Wadgaon, and although the treaty was promptly repudiated by the Bombay Government, it had the effect of shattering their military prestige in the eyes of the Indian Powers. To some extent the position was retrieved by the campaigns of Goddard in Gujarat, the capture of the Gwalior Fort by Popham and the defeat inflicted on Sindhia at Sipri by Camac, which raised the English name again. The English promptly captured Bassein and the other islands they coveted, and Goddard moved up to the Bhor Ghat to secure the Konkan and threaten Poona. But the difficulty of maintaining a large force during the rains in the face of an elusive enemy of an overwhelming numerical superiority led to the withdrawal from the Bhor Ghat, leaving the Marathas at liberty to pillage the Konkan.

The English were at this time at war with Haidar Ali and had suffered severe reverses at his hands. The Madras Government made a frantic appeal to Poona for peace, and the Supreme Government in Calcutta also, alarmed at the possibility of a general alliance among the Marathas, Nizam Ali and Haidar Ali, at once hastened to end hostilities with the Marathas. Through the mediation of Sindhia the Treaty of Salbai was concluded in May 1782. The treaty provided for a general pacification in south India, including in its scope the Bhonsla, Nizam Ali and Haidar Ali; the restitution of all conquests made since the Treaty of Purandhar; and the exclusion of other European nations from the Maratha dominions. Although on the surface the treaty was honourable to the Marathas, it really marked the end of the first chapter of the disintegration of the powerful Confederacy. It was brought about by several factors: the internal dissensions at Poona, the defections of Mudaji

Bhonsla of Berar and Fateh Singh Gaikwar of Baroda, and the north-Indian interests of Mahadaji Sindhia which impelled him to remain on friendly terms with the English. A part of the responsibility must be shared by the French, who raised hopes in the hearts of the Maratha leaders without being able to fulfil them, as will be described in later chapters. Relying on the promises held out by the French, Nana Phadnavis delayed the final exchange of ratification till February 1783. The failure of the French to give them any military assistance so alienated the Marathas that after 1783 they definitely abandoned the idea of an alliance with France, and the later political overtures from Pondicherry received but scant consideration at Poona.

The later history of the Marathas may be sketched very briefly, as being unconnected with the hopes and plans of the French. Although the French sought to maintain diplomatic relations with the Marathas for some time more, with empty promises of military assistance against the English on the outbreak of the next war in Europe, the Marathas could hardly place any reliance in them and turned back completely from the idea of an alliance with the French. Franco-Maratha diplomatic relations practically came to an end with the withdrawal of the French envoy, Montigny, from Poona in 1788, although occasional exchange of letters between Pondicherry and Poona continued till 1793.

After the Treaty of Salbai the Marathas turned their attention to the extension and consolidation of their dominions, avoiding any conflict with the English and maintaining outwardly friendly relations with them. In north India Sindhia established his secure control, taking the Mughal Emperor under his protection. But for a temporary eclipse in 1788, the Maratha power in north India remained unchallenged till the second Anglo-Maratha war in 1803-5. In south India too the period saw a marked increase in Maratha power. The Marathas defeated Tipu in 1785-87 and the Nizam of Hyderabad in 1795. In the third Anglo-Mysore war (1790-92) the Marathas co-operated with the English and made substantial territorial gains in return.

Thus, down to about the close of the century the Maratha power maintained its vigour despite the lack of unity among the different chiefs and particularly the personal rivalry between Sindhia and Nana Phadnavis. But the situation changed rather abruptly after the accession of Baji Rao II (son of the old English ally, Raghunath Rao) as Peshwa in 1796 and became worse after the death (1800) of the astute diplomat and statesman, Nana Phadnavis, who had guided the destiny of the Marathas for more than two decades. Within two years of the death of Nana Phadnavis internal strife among the Marathas took such a violent form that Baji Rao II, driven out from Poona, sought the assistance of the English and concluded a treaty of Subsidiary Alliance with them. The Treaty of Bassein (1802) gave the English an opportunity of establishing themselves at the heart of the Maratha dominions. Their position was challenged by the other members of the Maratha Confederacy, Sindhia, Bhonsla and Holkar, but the second Anglo-Maratha war demonstrated more clearly than before the military superiority of the English. All the Maratha states had to recognise the fact and agree to new relations with the English, which considerably curtailed their independence. After the second Anglo-Maratha war, there set in such a rapid process of decay and disintegration in all the Maratha states that when the final hour of reckoning came with the English, none of them was in a position to give a real fight. The Power which had once aspired after the inheritance of the Mughal Empire suffered an inglorious exit from the political scene.

V. *Hyderabad.*

Next to the Maratha Confederacy in importance was Hyderabad, not so much for its military strength as for the crafty diplomacy of its ruler, Nizam Ali. Originating from the Mughal Viceroyalty of the Deccan, Hyderabad became virtually independent in the second quarter of the 18th century under Nizam-ul-mulk. From 1751 to 1758 it was the scene of French military exploits which later showed the way to their more successful rivals, the English. It was in Hyderabad that for the first time Bussy demonstrated how an Indian state could be kept under effective foreign domination while outwardly preserving its independence. The connection between Hyderabad and France was so close that during the French expedition of 1782-83 Bussy and all the Frenchmen who had knowledge of Indian affairs felt confident of the support of their traditional friend and ally.

When Bussy left Hyderabad on the summons of Lally in 1758, the five Northern Sarkars, the stronghold of the French, fell into the hands of the English. In order to regularise their position they obtained from the Emperor, Shah Alam, a grant of these territories by the Treaty of Allahabad in 1765. But although armed with the Imperial grant, they had to come to an agreement with Nizam Ali before they could take possession of the territories. By the Treaty of Mutual Assistance, concluded in November 1766, the Northern Sarkars were ceded to the English for an annual tribute of 9 lakhs of rupees, and in return the English agreed to furnish the Nizam with troops against his enemies, the tribute for the Sarkars to be remitted every year that he might require such military assistance. The treaty of 1766 was in fact directed against Haidar Ali, whose increasing power had alarmed both the English and Nizam Ali. Since Nizam Ali was at this time in league with the Marathas, there was thus formed a 'Triple Alliance' to curb the overweening ambition of Haidar.

But the diplomatic relations among the three southern Powers were quickly changing, and alliances were formed with as much rapidity as broken. The frontier districts between the three states were always changing hands, and each Power was ever on the alert to take advantage of any temporary weakness of the others. Since 1761 Nizam Ali had attacked the Marathas three times, first to take advantage of the expected disorder following the death of Balaji Baji Rao; second, in alliance with Raghunath Rao; and third, in alliance with Janoji Bhonsla. But after these three attempts Nizam Ali drew closer to the Marathas with a view to check the ever-growing ambition of Haidar. In 1767 the English, Nizam Ali and the Marathas attacked Haidar. The Marathas were quickly bought off, and Nizam Ali also withdrew from the English alliance for a time and joined with Haidar. But in 1768 he changed sides once more and renewed the alliance with the English. It did not, however, affect the course of the war with Haidar. Victorious in the field, Haidar appeared before Madras in March 1769 and practically dictated peace. The English had to conclude a defensive alliance with him which was incompatible with their treaty with Nizam Ali, since each alliance was directed against the other.

By the treaties of 1766 and 1768, the English were given possession of only four of the Northern Sarkars, the fifth one, Guntoor, to remain under Basalat Jang, Nizam Ali's brother, for life. But they were anxious to acquire Guntoor earlier, for two reasons: first, to round off their territories along the coast; and second, to eliminate the French menace, since Basalat Jang had taken in his service a body of French troops commanded by de Lallée. The declaration of war with France in 1778 made the menace more pressing than ever, and the Madras Government opened direct negotiations with Basalat Jang, without any reference to his suzerain and brother, Nizam Ali. Basalat Jang also, anxious to get the protection of the English against Haidar's aggression, readily agreed in 1779 to rent Guntoor to them. It gave mortal offence to Nizam Ali, who replied to the English by taking into his service the French troops dismissed by his brother, Basalat Jang. There were under him two great French captains, de Lallée, and Aumont, and French influence in Hyderabad, once the scene of Bussy's glory, seemed quite promising when Montigny first arrived at Poona about the middle of 1779. Nizam Ali went even further and started active negotiations for a 'Triple Alliance' between him, Haidar Ali and the Marathas. In spite of mutual jealousies which prevented any permanent combination of the three southern Powers, the negotiations did not meet with any difficulty, since both Haidar Ali and the Marathas were at this time at war with the English. The plan of the allied Powers was not merely to harass the English position in the south, but also to send an expedition to Bengal with the help of Mudaji Bhonsla.

The English were very much alarmed at the prospect of such a powerful coalition and at once set about breaking it up before it had the time to become fully cemented. They entered into negotiations with Mudaji Bhonsla with a view to detaching him from the coalition and bought off the expeditionary force sent against Cuttack. Sindhia was conciliated by holding out to him the prospect of leadership of the Maratha Confederacy, and earnest appeals for peace were sent out from Madras to the Poona Government. Finally, the menace of the coalition was for the time being completely removed by conciliating Nizam Ali, its prime mover. The action of the Madras Government in acquiring Guntoor from Basalat Jang was disowned by the Supreme Government in Calcutta and the territory was restored. Nizam Ali went back to his old alliance and friendship with the English. He did not, however, close the doors upon the French but, like a wily diplomat, maintained at least an appearance of friendship towards them, whom he claimed as the traditional allies of Hyderabad.

In the third Anglo-Mysore war (1790-92) the Nizam, like the Marathas, co-operated with the English and was rewarded with territorial gains at the cost of Tipu. But he was soon to learn that English friendship was an inconstant thing. When he was attacked by the Marathas in 1795, he received no help from the English and suffered a disastrous defeat. It is not surprising that after this lesson his relations with the English became cool and he sought to improve his military position by augmenting the French force in his service under Raymond. It did not mean, however, that there was any connection between Hyderabad and the Revolutionary Government in Paris, nor that Nizam Ali really expected any help from that quarter as against the English. When Wellesley arrived, the French menace loomed very large in the imagination of the English. So he promptly turned to eliminating that danger by procuring the dismissal of all the French troops then in the service of the different Indian Princes. His first success was in winning over the Nizam of Hyderabad, who, afraid of his stronger neighbours, signed the treaty of Subsidiary Alliance (1798) offered by Wellesley, dismissed all French troops, and bartered away his political independence for a guarantee of English protection.

VI. *Mysore.*

The third important Power of south India was Mysore, ruled by an adventurer of remarkable vigour and ability. Starting his career in a humble capacity in the service of Nanjraj, the chief minister of the Raja of Mysore, Haidar Ali rose step by step, increasing his wealth and military strength, until in

1761 he was in a position to supplant his patron and assume the powers of government himself, keeping the nominal Raja in close confinement. His rise to power was helped not only by the internal troubles in Mysore but also by the opportunities presented by the Anglo-French conflict in the Carnatic, which gave him his first lessons in European methods of warfare. It was during the Carnatic wars that began his close connection with the French which remained the traditional policy of Mysore throughout the rule of his family.

Under Haidar Ali the decadent state of Mysore was suddenly raised to a political and military importance which it had never enjoyed before. In the course of a few years it absorbed all the petty principalities lying beyond its original frontiers and came to extend up to the river Krishna in the north and the Malabar Coast in the west. Such a rapid expansion was made possible by a variety of factors,—the remarkable abilities of Haidar both in war as well as in diplomacy; the anarchical conditions which prevailed in the south as a legacy of the prolonged wars of succession in the Deccan and the Carnatic; the weakness and disunity of the petty chiefs, Maratha, Pathan and Nayar, who were crushed one after another; the decline of the Maratha power as a result of the disaster of Panipat and even more of the internal dissensions after 1772; and finally, the jealousy and suspicion between the Courts of Poona and Hyderabad which prevented any concerted action to check the rising Power in the south.

Immediately after his usurpation of power in 1761 Haidar Ali started on a career of conquest and by 1763 considerably extended his dominions in the north, the most important acquisitions being Sera and Bednore. The northern drive brought him inevitably into conflict with the Marathas and for many years the territory lying between the Tungbhadra and the Krishna remained the bone of contention between the two Powers. Although Haidar had counted on the decline of the Maratha power after the disaster of Panipat, he was soon disillusioned, and throughout the rule of the young and vigorous Peshwa Madhav Rao he suffered repeated checks to his ambitions. It was not till the outbreak of internal dissensions among the Marathas, following the untimely death of Madhav Rao, that Haidar got his opportunity to extend his dominions as far north as the river Krishna. He received his first check in 1764, when the Peshwa himself came with an army vastly superior to his own and inflicted a decisive defeat on him. Haidar had to give up most of his new acquisitions and purchase peace by paying a huge sum of money as tribute. But immediately after, in 1766, he turned his arms in a different direction and conquered the Malabar country from petty Nayar chiefs. Before he had the time to consolidate his hold over the newly acquired territories he had to face a new danger, a combined attack by the three neighbouring Powers, the Marathas, Nizam Ali and the English, the last acting on behalf of the nominal ruler of the Carnatic. Haidar succeeded in breaking up the coalition by diplomacy. The Marathas were purchased with money and Nizam Ali was even induced to enter into an alliance with him against the remaining Power of the coalition, the English. The alliance did not last long but it served Haidar's purpose, and after two years of indecisive campaigns he practically dictated peace to the English in 1769.

By the peace treaty the English engaged to enter into a 177 defensive alliance with Haidar, which was flatly contradictory to their earlier treaty with Nizam Ali. Besides, they had no real intention to render military assistance to the ambitious ruler of Mysore, whose rise to power constituted the gravest source of danger to the Carnatic. Haidar soon found it out when in 1771 he was again engaged in a war with the Marathas, who appeared this time bent on his total destruction and refused to be purchased with money. He was, however, saved by the sudden death of Peshwa Madhav Rao and the outbreak of internal dissensions at Poona, which even enabled him to take the offensive. It was from this time that he found his path cleared of all obstacles. Although in 1774 he had to face another Maratha invasion under Raghunath Rao, who succeeded his murdered nephew Narayan Rao as Peshwa, he was again saved by the news of a sudden revolution at Poona which placed the Ministerial party opposed to Raghunath Rao in power. Haidar at once entered into a pact with Raghunath Rao, who ceded to him all Maratha rights south of the Krishna in return for financial assistance for his war against the Ministerial party.

Although Raghunath Rao did not succeed in establishing his authority at Poona even with the help of his English allies, the pact served Haidar well and he quickly consolidated his hold over the territories ceded to him. By taking the side of Raghunath Rao, however, he incurred the enmity of the successful Ministerial party at Poona, who in 1777 induced Nizam Ali to make a joint attack on him. Haidar saved himself by buying off Nizam Ali's general and then inflicting defeat on the Marathas. But soon after, in 1779, he threw up Raghunath Rao and entered into a pact with the Ministerial party at Poona, by which he retained all the advantages he had secured by his agreement with Raghunath Rao in return for joining a coalition of the Marathas and Nizam Ali against the English. Haidar had his own grievances against the English, —their refusal to honour the treaty of 1769 with respect to giving him military assistance against his enemies; their occupation of the Sarkar of Guntoor and lending troops to Basalat Jang, his enemy; the traditional dispute with the Nawab of the Carnatic, a protégé of the English; and finally their capture of Mahé in defiance of his warning that it would be considered as an act of hostility against him. Thus the stage was set for a three-Power attack on the English. Although English diplomacy succeeded in detaching Nizam Ali from the coalition, Haidar started the war in 1780 which lasted for nearly four years.

At the end of the war in 1784 Mysore stood as the leading military power in south India, which roused the jealousy of the Marathas and Nizam Ali. In 1785 the two Powers combined and declared war on Tipu who had succeeded his father in December, 1782. Tipu thought it prudent to purchase peace in 1787 by paying a large sum of money and ceding a few districts. The coalition of the Marathas and Nizam Ali did not, however, break up at once, and when at the beginning of 1790 the English declared war on him, following his attack on their ally, the Raja of Travancore, he found both the Powers ranged against him in alliance with the English. The treaty imposed upon him in 1792 marked unmistakably the beginning of his fall, the final destruction being postponed by a few years more.

Mysore under Haidar and Tipu was always considered as the special ally of the French. Such an impression, however, was based not so much on real connections as on the hopes entertained by each side to make use of the other for its own advantage. As we shall see in later chapters, there was little basis for a solid agreement between them and no real unity of interests despite their common animosity against the English.

In spite of this, however, both sides maintained the illusion of a close friendship and co-operation against the English, even after 1793 when the French lost all their bases in India. In the end this illusion did not bring any benefit to either party, but only helped the expansion of the English power. When Wellesley came out to India, he found Tipu engaged in secret negotiations with the French in the Isle of France. The French expedition to Egypt and the indiscreet proclamation of Malartic, Governor of the Isle of France, calling for volunteers for service under Tipu, roused English suspicions still further about French designs on India. The suspicions might or might not have been justified, but they served as a good pretext for English action against Tipu, to crush him completely and deprive the French of any base in India. The war of 1799, which ended in the destruction of Mysore as an independent State, was the result of the policy of maintaining the illusion of Franco-Mysorean friendship, which did not in reality exist.

VII. *The Nawab of the Carnatic.*

Before concluding our review of the Indian Powers in the south a brief notice may be taken of two other Princes, Muhammad Ali and Basalat Jang, who although of no practical importance played nevertheless an interesting part in the tangled politics of the period by rousing the jealousy and fear of the principal competitors in the field. Muhammad Ali, Nawab of the Carnatic, owed his position entirely to the English. He was their candidate in the succession dispute; it was their arms which had defeated his rival and his French supporters; and it was their victory in Europe and America that had made France recognise him in the peace treaty as the lawful ruler of the Carnatic. It was not surprising therefore that the English should have continued, even after peace, that complete military control over the Carnatic which they had established during the war. On the other hand, what was surprising was that, unlike as in Bengal where the establishment of military control was followed within fifteen years by the assumption of complete administrative power, the English continued to preserve the independence of the Nawab of the Carnatic so far as internal administration, including revenue, was concerned. Not only that, they even secured from the Mughal Emperor by the Treaty of Allahabad of 1765 the severance of the traditional dependence of the Nawab of the Carnatic on the Subadar of the Deccan and handed over to him the administration of the Northern Sarkars, ceded to them by Nizam Ali.

This seeming preservance of the independence of the Nawab was due to a number of factors,—the initial reluctance of the English to assume administrative responsibility; the complete control which they had over the person of the Nawab who lived at Madras with his whole family under close guard; the garrisoning of his principal forts by English troops and the presence of a large number of English officers in his army; and finally the influence of the persons, including most of the Company's servants at Madras, who were interested in lending money to the Nawab at exorbitant rates of interest, the loans being secured by the assignment of revenues of particular districts. Muhammad Ali was quick to realise the importance of the last factor and tried to utilise it to influence the policy of the English Government of Madras. For a time he played his game with success and made use of the English to conquer the rich principality of Tanjore for him in 1773, although he was not allowed to retain it long. But the Nawab and his English creditors over-reached themselves, and shortly after strict orders were sent from England to restrain their corrupt influence over the Madras Government. During the second Anglo-Mysore war (1780-84) the Nawab was even deprived of his administrative independence, the control being taken over by the English Government for the more efficient prosecution of the war. Although he was restored in his authority at the end of the war, the control over administration was once more taken up by the English during the third Anglo-Mysore war (1790-92). Thus long before the discovery of the Nawab's treacherous correspondence in 1799, leading to the permanent assumption of the administration of the Carnatic by the Madras Government, the indications were quite clear about the objective of English policy.

Even when Muhammad Ali retained his nominal independence his real position was universally known, and none of the Indian and European Powers who maintained *Wakils* at his Court considered him to be a political factor of any importance. He was, however, an adept in intrigue and kept up an illusion in the minds of many about his real intentions. That was the part he played in the tangled politics of the south.

VIII. *Basalat Jang.*

Basalat Jang was the younger brother of Nizam Ali, equally ambitious and crafty but far less able. His importance in the complex political situation of the south was derived from two factors,—first, occupation of the Sarkar of Guntoor, interposed between the Carnatic and the four Sarkars ceded to the English by Nizam Ali; and second, employment of a body of French troops in his service, commanded first by Zéphir and later by de Lallée. He thus came to be feared by the English as a source of danger to their power in south India, particularly because of his control of a small seaport at Motupalli which enabled him to keep up regular communication with the French. To eliminate this danger the English were anxious either to get earlier possession of Guntoor, which by their agreement with Nizam Ali in 1766 was to be retained by Basalat Jang for his life-time, or to prevail upon Basalat Jang to dismiss the French contingent in his service. They tried the second alternative first but without success, as Basalat Jang required a body of European troops to further his ambitions. He was on unfriendly terms with his brother, Nizam Ali, and at conflict with Haidar Ali; and he even entertained hopes of conquering the Carnatic with the help of the French. But in 1779 his fortunes were at a low ebb. Pondicherry had fallen to the English and Haidar was threatening his territories. He then threw himself into the arms of the English, dismissed the French contingent in his service and rented the Sarkar of Guntoor to the Madras Government, in return for the assistance of a body of English troops for the defence of his other possessions. The English were thus freed from one source of danger, but it brought them into conflict with Nizam Ali, who resented their occupation of Guntoor without any reference to him and in reply attempted to form a coalition of the three southern Powers against them. To conciliate him Guntoor was restored to Basalat Jang next year. After the latter's death in 1782, the Sarkar remained in the possession of Nizam Ali until finally made over to the English in 1788. Anyway, with the English occupation of Guntoor in 1779 Basalat Jang lost what little political importance had been attached to him till then.

CHAPTER II

THE GOVERNMENT, THE COMPANY AND FRENCH POLICY IN INDIA

After the sketch of the political condition of India from 1763 to 1816, we may proceed to a brief review of the nature of French political ambitions in India, the history of the *Compagnie des Indes* and the condition of the French Government after the Seven Years' War. It will help a better understanding of the French activities in India given in the succeeding chapters and will also offer an explanation for the contrast between the zeal of the Frenchmen in India for a revival of political influence in this country and the indifference of the home authorities.

I. *The Policy of Dupleix.*

Every student of Indian history will admit the importance of the part played by the French in giving a new turn to India's political destiny in the 18th century. Of the four great European nations who came to India for trade, the French appeared last on the scene. But they were the first to conceive the ambitious project of building up a large territorial empire in India. It was possible for them to do so because of the political condition of India in the first half of the 18th century. But equally important, at least, was the genius of one man, Dupleix. It was Dupleix who first showed the way of intervening in the internal disputes of Indian Powers and of acquiring political control over vast territories through puppet Indian Princes.

There is some difference among historians about the exact nature of the political ideas of Dupleix. The admirers of Dupleix hold him up as a pioneer among empire-builders and credit him with a mature and well-thought-out political plan, which failed only because of the apathy and negligence of the French Government and the Company. Thus Henri Martin in his monumental *Histoire de France* writes about Dupleix: "The genius of a Richelieu had matured in a Factory. Dupleix was the first to realise the inevitable result of the contact between the static societies of the East and the progressive societies of Europe..........; he had seen Asia, like America and like the whole world, destined to submit to the law of the European races.......Dupleix judged India destined to be conquered, not by other Asians, like those who had ravaged her before, but by Europeans; among the European powers, Portugal had fallen and Holland was declining; there remained only France and England. Dupleix was determined to give India to France.........His plan was as much prudent in respect of means as audacious in respect of the final objective"[1]. For the failure of Dupleix to achieve this ambitious project, Martin put the entire blame on the French Government and the Company. "Asia would have been ours if, with Dupleix and Bussy in India, we could still have Louis XIV and Colbert at Versailles, or if we could have only Law. But in place of Louis XIV and Colbert, we had Louis XV and Madame de Pompadour and the inept merchants who directed the Company of the Indies"[2]. Again, "There is not a single instance in modern history of a nation being betrayed to this extent by its own Government"[3].

On the other hand, Alfred Martineau, who has written the most sober and authoritative biography of Dupleix, asserts that Dupleix did not start with any conception of empire-building, that he was gradually driven to it by circumstances he had not foreseen earlier, and that the failure of his project was due at least as much to his own wrong moves and miscalculations as to the indifference of the home government. As Martineau states, "If the psychologist could penetrate with certainty into the thoughts of statesmen, there would be little, very little indeed, in their actions which would appear to him inspired by high ideas, particularly by foresight and plans for the future. Chance and self-interest guide them more than one would like generally to confess. Dupleix did not escape this common law. Coming to India with the sole object of making money, he was led unexpectedly by the course of events and by a sort of financial necessity to a policy of territorial expansion which he had not foreseen earlier, and even the vaguest idea of which he did not form for the first time till twenty-seven years after his arrival in the peninsula"[1]. Analysing the motive which prompted Dupleix to conceive the idea of a colonial empire, Martineau writes, "Constantly embarrassed in his trading operations by the delay or insufficiency of funds coming from France, he came slowly to the idea that the only means to get rid of such embarrassments was to find money in India, without waiting for funds from Europe and without having to seek the assistance of bankers. That made it necessary to have a fixed territorial revenue, the collection of which could be assured only by the exercise of a political power. Thus was first conceived and later developed more fully in the mind of Dupleix the idea of creating for our advantage a sort of colonial empire in India, where we would be practically the masters under the authority, more nominal than real, of Indian princes, who would owe their thrones or their security to us. But this idea, which was to change the face of India and in a certain measure that of the world, was not in his mind at any time before the year 1749 or perhaps before 1750"[2]. Discussing the causes of the failure of Dupleix, Martineau has emphasised the wrong judgment and blind obstinacy of Dupleix himself. "No doubt, at the beginning, the error was legitimate; but in the later stage, when came an unending series of misfortunes and disillusions, it became evident that the substance was being sacrificed for the shadow. The blindness or the obstinacy of Dupleix was the principal cause of his fall"[3].

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[1] Martin—*Histoire de France*, Vol. XV, pp. 307-308.

[2] *Ibid*, p. 458.

[3] *Ibid*, p. 464.

In spite of such divergence of opinion about the origin, nature and practicability of the political conceptions of Dupleix, the fact remains that he had indicated a new way which was to lead one day to the establishment of European domination in India. His importance in history is not lessened by the fact that he himself did not succeed in his efforts. His failure may be explained in various ways,—his own wrong moves and miscalculations, the lack of support from the French Government and the Company, or, most important of all, the fundamental weakness of France in a colonial struggle, as demonstrated clearly in other theatres of conflict too during the Seven Years' War. But the value of his political conception was realised by the French as well as by their more successful rivals, the English. It is not really true that the French Government and the Company did not appreciate the importance of Dupleix's project. But for his reverses in the Carnatic, he would not have been so abruptly recalled. Even when he was replaced by Godeheu, it did not mean a complete reversal of his policy or a throwing away of any of the material advantages secured by him. Godeheu's treaty with the English in 1754 still left the French in possession of the additional territories round Pondicherry and Karikal which had been acquired earlier; in occupation of important posts in the Carnatic; and in enjoyment of the extensive *jagir* of the four Northern Sarkars with a controlling authority in Hyderabad. Thus, not a single material advantage had been sacrificed, except the extremely doubtful prospect of securing the mastery of the Carnatic. If the Seven Years' War had not broken out shortly after, the French would have got time to consolidate their position thus secured, making it easier to realise the political project of Dupleix.

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[1] Martineau—*Dupleix et l'Inde Française,* Vol. I, Introduction, p. vi.

[2] *Ibid,* Vol. II, Introduction, p. ix.

[3] *Ibid,* Vol. III, p. 418.

II. *The Seven Years' War and the Destruction of French Hopes.*

During the Seven Years' War France made earnest efforts to retain the advantages she had secured in India and even to ensure the realisation of Dupleix's project in full by eliminating the English completely from the Coromandel Coast. That there was no indifference on the part of the French Government is admitted by the eminent historian Henri Martin, who is otherwise so critical of the Government of Louis XV. France sent out to India strong land and naval forces, which she could spare consistent with her needs in Europe and America where her interests were more vitally affected. Martin only dislikes the choice of the leader, Lally, and regrets that "such a person had been given the resources which Dupleix never had at his disposal from 1747 to 1754"[1]. Ultimately the French suffered a decisive defeat, and far from realising the ambitious project of Dupleix or retaining the advantages left to them by the treaty of Godeheu, they even lost all their old settlements and factories in India. Chandernagore was the first to be captured by the English in March 1757, followed by the expulsion of the French from all the subordinate factories in Bengal. The recall of Bussy from the Deccan in 1758, to strengthen Lally's forces for the war in the Carnatic, left the Northern Sarkars exposed to an English attack from Bengal. The Sarkars were promptly lost together with the two old settlements of Masulipatam and Yanam, and French influence in the Deccan, so laboriously built up by the genius of Bussy, was completely destroyed. Nor were the French more fortunate in the Carnatic. Their offensive operations miscarried, all their strongholds in the Carnatic were lost one by one, and finally they suffered a most decisive defeat at Wandiwash (January 22, 1760). After a blockade of several months Pondicherry capitulated on the 16th January, 1761. Karikal had been captured earlier; Mahé on the Malabar Coast and the two remaining forts in French hands in the Carnatic, Jinji and Thiagar, were also lost in the course of the year.

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[1] Martin—*Histoire de France,* Vol. XV, p. 538.

That was the disastrous end of the policy initiated by Dupleix so far as the French were concerned, while their more successful rivals, the English, taking their inspiration from the same ideas built up a vast empire in India. The net result of the Seven Years' War has been stated by Voltaire thus in his *Précis du Siècle de Louis XV*: "At last there was left to the French in this part of the world only regret for having spent immense sums for over forty years for maintaining a Company which never made the least profit, which never paid to its shareholders and creditors from the profits of its commerce, which in its Indian administration lived only on secret brigandage and which had been sustained only by a part of the farming of tobacco granted to it by the King; a memorable and perhaps useless example of the little knowledge which the French have had so far about the grand and ruinous commerce of India"[1].

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[1] Voltaire—*Précis du Siècle de Louis XV* (Oeuvres Complètes, XXII), p. 310.

No doubt Voltaire never had any sympathy for the policy of Dupleix, but there are other French historians also who have condemned the French colonial adventure in India during the Seven Years' War. Martineau in his biography of Bussy points out that Bussy had no genuine interest in the task assigned to him by Dupleix and that his idea of a sound colonial policy was entirely different from that of Dupleix. In his celebrated letter of 1753 Bussy had represented to Dupleix "that our settlements on the coast were sufficient for our commerce and that therefore it was useless and perhaps dangerous to remain in the Deccan, where we would run the risk of being obliged to take sides in the quarrels of the country princes to the detriment of our commerce"[1]. Bussy believed that the real strength of a country lay in a homogeneous territory, sufficiently large to resist attacks, anything beyond which "is a luxury and sometimes a danger"[2]. Martineau does not hide his preference for the policy of Bussy to that of Dupleix, although he admits that the policy of Dupleix "was entirely the modern theory of colonisation, a theory which triumphed after his death, and one can quite understand why it found so many apologists later"[3]. But he asserts that at the time it was conceived by Dupleix, "no policy was more inopportune ..... It would have been much more useful to retain in Europe all our land and naval forces, and it is perhaps because we dispersed them to Canada and India, particularly to Canada, that we lost the Seven Years' War. At that time ..... the primary interests of France required her to confine her attention to Europe. When the house is on fire, one does not think of the stable; it is Voltaire who was right"[4].

The failure of the French in India in the Seven Years' War is generally attributed to a number of factors,—the rashness and arrogance of Lally, the violent discord between Lally and the Company's officers at Pondicherry, the acute want of money which crippled French military operations, the recall of Bussy from the Deccan, the bad choice of officers, the timidity of d'Aché which deprived Lally of naval support at every critical moment, and many others. It is useless to try to assess the extent to which each of these factors contributed to the French defeat. The French Government, shaken by the intensity of public opinion, found a scapegoat in Lally, who was sentenced to death for "betraying the interest of the nation". Voltaire condemned it as "one of those murders which are committed with the sword of justice"[1]. Even Martin who is so strongly critical of Lally has to observe, "The real criminal on whom posterity would fasten the responsibility for the loss of India was not Comte de Lally but the King who had ordered his death"[2]. Voltaire perhaps diagnosed more correctly than most French historians of later days the real cause of French failure in India in the Seven Years' War. "The real cause was the same as in other parts of the world; the superiority of the English fleet, the carefulness and perseverance of that nation, its credit, its ready money and that spirit of patriotism which is stronger in the long run than the trading spirit and the greed for riches"[3].

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[1] Martineau—*Bussy et l'Inde Française*, p. 445.

[2] *Ibid*, p. 450.

[3] *Ibid*, p. 449.

[4] *Ibid*, p. 450.

The war in the later stage had proved so disastrous to France in every theatre of conflict that by 1762 the French Government was forced to the necessity of seeking peace at any cost. The Preliminaries of Peace were signed at Fontainebleu on the 3rd November 1762, followed by the conclusion of a definitive treaty signed in Paris on the 10th February 1763. The terms of the Treaty of Paris were almost crushing for France. "France had lost the flower of her navy, her vast dominion in North America, the remains of the conquests of Dupleix and Bussy, her best possessions on the western coast of Africa and several in the Antilles. England had acquired an enormous increase of territory and an overwhelming arrogance of tone. For the first time since the Middle Ages she had defeated France by her own strength and almost without allies, France, on the contrary, having several powerful auxiliaries: she had defeated France only by the superiority of her government"[4]. Voltaire in his inimitable style has described the result of the war thus: "In the course of this disastrous war, the State lost the most brilliant part of the nation's youth, more than half the money in circulation, its navy, its commerce, its credit. One would think that it would have been very easy to avert such great misfortunes by coming to a compromise with the English for a small territory in dispute in Canada. But some ambitious persons, just to prove their worth and their necessity to the State, precipitated France into this fatal war. It was the same in 1741. The *amour-propre* of two or three persons was sufficient to desolate the whole of Europe. France was in such a pressing need of peace that she considered those who concluded the treaty as benefactors of the country. The debts which pressed heavily on the State were much greater than those of even the reign of Louis XIV. Only the extraordinary expenses for the war in just one year amounted to four hundred millions; let one imagine the rest from that. France would have lost heavily even if she had been victorious"[1].

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[1] Voltaire—*Fragments on India*, p. 86.

[2] Martin—*Histoire de France*, Vol. XV, p. 572.

[3] Voltaire, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

[4] Martin, *op. cit.*, Vol. XV, p. 597.

III. *The Treaty of Paris and the restoration of French territories.*

By Art. 11 of the Treaty of Paris France was given back all the settlements and factories she possessed in India in 1749. This put her back in her old position before Dupleix launched his ambitious schemes for the mastery of the Carnatic and the Deccan. Only one exception was made, in the case of Chandernagore. The French were deprived of the right of fortifying the place or constructing any kind of defensive works and of introducing troops in the settlement beyond the number required for the maintenance of internal law and order. This restriction had to be accepted in recognition of the reality of the situation in Bengal. There the English had obtained complete mastery and could not be expected to suffer the existence of any foreign fortified settlement with a large number of troops constituting a threat to their position. Together with their settlements and factories the old trading rights and privileges of the French were also recognised by the treaty.

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[1] Voltaire—*Précis du Siècle de Louis XV* (Oeuvres Complètes, XXII), p. 319.

Thus, with the exception of the restriction regarding Chandernagore the treaty of 1763 seemed to have placed the two nations, the French and the English, in the same relation to each other as had existed in 1749. But in reality a profound change had come over in their respective positions in India by the steady expansion of the English power, and when the French returned to India in 1765 they found the old balance of power completely upset. In 1749 both the nations were on a footing of equality in Bengal and on the Coromandel Coast, while neither of them had any political influence in the interior of the country. In 1765 while the French position remained nearly the same, the English had obtained the mastery of Bengal and the Carnatic; Oudh was at their mercy; they were in occupation of the Northern Sarkars, wrested from the French, and the ruler of Hyderabad had been reduced to a subordinate ally dependent on their protection; even the Mughal Emperor was living as their pensioner. The dream of Dupleix had come true, but for the benefit of his adversaries.

After the conclusion of peace in Europe, Jean Law de Lauriston was appointed Governor of the French settlements in India and Royal Commissioner for taking possession of the settlements from the English. Law de Lauriston had been the Chief of the French factory at Kasimbazar in 1757, when the English moved against it after the capture of Chandernagore. Law then started on his career of wandering and adventure, taking service under Prince Ali Gauhar, later to become Emperor Shah Alam II, and being taken prisoner by the English in January 1761. His courageous behaviour won for him due recognition on his return to France at the end of the war. He was promoted to the rank of a Colonel and created a Chevalier of St. Louis. Finally he was appointed Governor of the French settlements in India in 1764. He received his instructions on the 18th March 1764, started for India on the 1st April and landed at Madras on the 29th January 1765. He took possession of Karikal on the 18th February and of Pondicherry on the 11th April 1765. The other French possessions were also restored in the course of the year.

The French came back to India in 1765 and their first thought was to re-build their position on the same footing of equality with the English which had existed before the war. The very humiliating terms of the Treaty of Paris made them determined to work for a revival of their lost political influence. It was no doubt too late to attempt a restoration of the old balance of power. But Frenchmen in India, whether officials or adventurers in the service of the Indian Princes, were full of hopes and believed that they could still retrieve the position of their nation by building up alliances with important country Powers. Thus, down to the next outbreak of Anglo-French hostilities in India during the War of American Independence they submitted to the French Government innumerable diplomatic and military projects which, however, received little serious attention in Paris for the first ten years. For an explanation for this contrast between the zeal and optimism of Frenchmen in India and the indifference of the home authorities, we have to turn to the conditions in France after the Seven Years' War. The re-establishment of the French position in India, as envisaged by those who drew up the diplomatic and military projects, required the support of the French Company and of the French Government. But the French Company, which had never much vitality, had become completely moribund after 1763 and was suppressed in 1769, while the attention of the French Government was fully absorbed by internal troubles and European complications, leaving it little inclination to think of its distant Indian possessions. Nor was the corrupt and effete administration of Louis XV, dominated by the King's mistresses who had the power of appointing and dismissing ministers, really in a position to adopt any bold and imaginative policy in colonial matters.

IV. *The Compagnie des Indes Orientales.*

To understand the situation of the French Company at the end of the Seven Years' War it is necessary to trace very briefly its earlier history, revealing two principal sources of its weakness,—organisation and finance. French trading ventures in the East started really from 1664, after the establishment of the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales*, although some abortive attempts had been made earlier by the *Compagnie des mers*

Orientales (1604), the *Compagnie des Moluques* (1615) and the *Compagnie d'Orient* (1642). The establishment of the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales* was due principally to the initiative of Colbert, and it started its career with the advantage of full governmental protection and patronage. The Company was given trading monopoly in the East for fifty years, with the power of acquiring territories, maintaining forces and making war and peace. But the organisation, virtually sponsored by the State, had little public enthusiasm and support behind it, and that remained the greatest source of its weakness throughout. French capital was shy and Colbert had to resort to every conceivable method of persuasion and threat to raise money for the Company. The first subscriptions raised represented in reality a forced loan.

Colbert had hoped that once given a start, the Company would in course of time be able to draw more and more on the spirit of enterprise of the business and capitalist class. But that hope was never realised. Within a decade the Company's commercial operations practically came to an end for want of money. In 1683 Colbert tried to save the situation by permitting private merchants to take part in the Eastern trade, provided they made use of the Company's vessels and paid a commission of 10% to the Company on their exports and imports, besides the normal freights. Although this measure was intended to enable the Company to strengthen its financial resources, it really resulted in inducing the Company to follow the easy-going method of allowing outsiders to make use of its trading privileges and living merely on the commissions and freights paid by them. Colbert's death in 1683 was a great blow to the Company. Whatever chances of recovery there yet might have been for the Company were destroyed by the long wars in which France was engaged in the closing years of the 17th and the early years of the 18th century.

During the War of the Spanish Succession the financial condition of the Company became so bad that it was compelled to suspend its trading operations and to leave its factories in India to their fate. The situation was saved in 1708 by the enterprise of some merchants of St. Malo, who entered into agreements with the Company for continuing the trade of the Indies on their own account by paying commissions to the Company for the use of its trading rights and privileges. In 1715, on the expiry of the fifty years' term of trading monopoly in the East, the Company's privileges were extended for another period of ten years. But the Company, anxious to retain its legal rights, was not in a position to make any use of them itself. So it transferred its rights to a newly constituted Society of Merchants of St. Malo on nearly the same terms as before. This agreement, however, lasted only for five years, till 1719, when the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales* was amalgamated with Law's *Compagnie d'Occident* under a new name, the *Compagnie des Indes,* to which was entrusted the whole of the colonial trade of France. The new Company took over all the establishments, ships and merchandise of the old Company, together with its debts both in France and in India.

Apart from the shyness of capital and lack of business enterprise in France, another factor which crippled the French Company was the reversal of the commercial policy of Colbert after the latter's death and the triumph of the Protectionist doctrine. In 1686 the French Government prohibited the importation of printed cloth from India in the interest of home manufactures. This measure was the result of the rivalry between manufacturing and commercial interests, which became increasingly acute after the death of Colbert. In 1702 the Company sustained another setback by the prohibition of the importation of silk manufactures from India. Finally, in 1709 the prohibition of the importation of all kinds of cotton goods from India marked the complete victory of Protectionism.

Discussing the lack of success of the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales,* Kaeppelin observes: "Thus the Company after fifty-five years of its existence had not succeeded in laying down a solid foundation for the French in India or even in establishing a regular commerce"[1]. The main causes of this failure were: the rigid control of the State, depriving the shareholders of any independence or initiative; the Protectionist policy of the Government, which hit the most profitable branch of the Company's trade; the lack of capital necessary for sustained commercial activity; and the European policy of Louis XIV, involving continuous wars for nearly half the period of the Company's existence.

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[1] Kaeppelin—*La Compagnie des Indes Orientales et François Martin,* p. 645.

V. *Law's System.*

The incorporation of the Company in Law's novel and complicated financial system resulted ultimately in further shaking of public confidence in commercial ventures. It is not necessary here to go into the details of the principle underlying Law's system and the methods adopted in its application The essence of Law's system was an extensive use of credit in all financial transactions and the virtual replacement of metallic currency by paper money in normal circulation. There was nothing basically wrong with the system, provided the credit structure was not unusually inflated and paper money thrown into circulation out of all proportion to the metallic reserve. Unfortunately, these cautions were not observed. The Company was united with Law's Bank and took over the entire management of the finances of the State, including the national debt. Law's system seemed to promise miraculous results, which roused the credulity and greed of all sections of the people. The Bank started issuing paper currency without any limit. The Company's shares also were multiplied with an amazing rapidity, and public confidence shot up their value in an abnormal craze for getting rich quickly.

The inevitable result followed in 1720. Some adverse reports led to suspicions about the stability of the system. Then the suspicions deepened into panic and finally came the crash towards the end of 1720. Law tried various methods to avert the catastrophe but in the end fled away to Holland. The administrators of the Bank and of the Company were arrested and thrown into prison. Liquidators were appointed by the Government for the two bodies. So far as the Company was concerned, its privileges were suspended and an examination of its accounts was ordered. Holders of shares were required to present them for verification. Out of 125,024 shares presented only 50,000 were accepted as genuine and the rest cancelled[1].

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[1] Barbier—*La Compagnie Française des Indes*, p. 23.
(Revue Historique de l'Inde Française, Pondicherry, III, 1919).

In spite of the unhappy ending of his system, Law had "demonstrated the power of credit and rendered useful services so far as the *Compagnie des Indes* was concerned. He had in effect revived the vitality of an organ, tried and discredited. He had given it a powerful impulse and the development of the Company in the course of the 18th century owed much to him"[1].

VI. *The Re-constitution of the Compagnie des Indes.*

The failure of Law's system did not mean the end of the Company. After the storm had passed and the situation had cleared up somewhat, the Company received a fresh lease of life. The French Government was keen on preserving the Company and helping it to develop on proper lines. An *arrêt* of 22nd March 1723 re-constituted the Company and defined its relations to the State. In 1725 all its old privileges were confirmed and at the same time its past liabilities wiped off. But while re-constituting the Company the Government was not willing to give it much freedom of action. "In place of leaving it master of its own destiny under broad State control, the Company was placed under strict dependence on the Government, which considerably hampered its working and became one of the important causes of its ruin. The spirit of initiative and hardy enterprise, which would have perhaps been encouraged if the shareholders interested in the development of the Company and in its success could have directed its operations without any restraints, was thus from the beginning discouraged or paralysed by such subjection to tutelage"[2].

For keeping the Company under proper surveillance there was set up a *Conseil des Indes*, with members selected by the King from among the officers of his Council and of the Navy and also prominent merchants. The twelve Directors of the Company were likewise to be selected by the King. The only concession made to the shareholders was that they were to elect at their annual meeting eight Syndics to look after their interests. In fact, no annual meeting was called till 1745, when on a strong representation from the shareholders they were given the right of electing twelve persons from whom the King would choose six Syndics. But even this concession was not maintained in practice. The Directors were also reduced to the status of simple clerks and the real management of the Company lay in the hands of the King's agents.

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[1] Barbier—*La Compagnie Française des Indes*, p. 24.

[2] *Ibid*, pp. 25-26.

In 1730 a Commissary appointed by the King was introduced into the administration of the Company. The result is described by Abbé Raynal: "From this period there was an end to all freedom of debate; there was no longer any connection between those who had the management of affairs, and the proprietors; no immediate intercourse between the managers and the government. All was directed by the influence, and according to the views of the Court. Mystery, that dangerous veil of arbitrary administration, concealed all the operations"[1]. In 1745 the King appointed two Commissaries. "From this time two parties were formed. Each Commissary had his own scheme, his own favourites, and endeavoured to get his own projects adopted. Hence arose divisions, intrigues, informations, and animosities, which though they originated in Paris, extended as far as India, and there broke out in a manner so fatal to the nation"[2]. To remedy the situation a third Commissary was later appointed. "This expedient, however, served only to increase the evil. Despotism had prevailed while there was but one; division ensued on the nomination of two; and from the moment three were appointed, all was anarchy and confusion".[3]

At the same time the Company was deprived of the possibility of accumulating a regular floating capital for its commercial transactions. From the very beginning of the French Company it had been the practice to pay the shareholders a fixed dividend irrespective of the results of trade. From 1723, by a Royal Order, the re-constituted Company was required to pay to the shareholders a dividend of 150 livres per share. These dividends were paid from the only secure source of the Company's income, the monopoly of the sale of tobacco which had been granted to the Company in discharge of the Government's obligation for the large sum of money lent by the Company under Law's administration. In 1723 the monopoly of the sale of tobacco yielded a profit of 2½ million livres and it rose to more than 8 millions in 1735.[1] This secure source of income, which should have been turned to accumulate a floating capital for the Company for its commercial operations, was diverted for the benefit of the shareholders.

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[1] Abbé Raynal—*A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies* (tr. by Justamond), II, p. 375.

[2] *Ibid*, p. 376.

[3] *Ibid*.

The shareholders, thus assured of a fixed dividend, were not much interested in the success of the Company's trade. The Company, deprived of the means of raising a floating capital, had to live on credit and public confidence. Before the outbreak of the War of the Austrian Succession, the Company had enjoyed a fairly long period of prosperity, but it could not succeed in constituting a floating capital from the profits of its commerce. As long as the shareholders received their dividends and the Directors their emoluments, nobody worried about the future. As Barbier has observed, "This explains to a large extent the inertia encountered by Dupleix in his difficult hours when the success of his venture required unanimity of efforts"[2].

VII. *Trade and Finance of the Compagnie des Indes.*

Under such a defective organisation not much commercial development could be expected. But surprisingly enough the Company showed remarkable commercial expansion down to the outbreak of the Seven Years' War. The foundation was laid by Law, who in 1719 acquired for the Company the port of Lorient which was to remain in its possession till 1764. There the Company built a magnificent naval station and arsenal. Law had also given a strong impulse to the construction and acquisition of ships, and after the fall of his system he left to the Company more than a hundred ships of different tonnage. These initial advantages helped the Company in the expansion of its commerce. From 1725 to 1759 the Company sent out to India an average of 20 vessels a year, while the returning vessels numbered on an average 15 a year. During the same period the Company spent 272,426,392 livres for the purchase of goods in India, which it sold in France for 532.000,000 livres, with a net profit of 253,069,631 livres[1].

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[1] Barbier—*La Compagnie Française des Indes*, p. 28.
(Revue Historique de l'Inde Française, Pondicherry, III, 1919).

[2] *Ibid*, p. 29.

The period of the greatest prosperity was from 1725 to 1740. There was not much diminution of trade during the War of the Austrian Succession or even in the period from 1751 to 1755. Thus the common impression that the policy of Dupleix had gravely hampered commercial operations is not quite correct. It was the Seven Years' War which dealt the most fatal blow to the Company's trade. From 1759 to 1764 the average annual profit amounted to only 400,000 livres. After the war there was a revival of trade and the profit rose to 11,000,000 livres on the eve of the suppression of the Company in 1769[2].

During the days of its prosperity the Company made a net profit of 200% on its Indian trade, after deducting all costs. The Company could have realised more but for the high figure of general costs amounting to 52% of the profits. Besides, the prohibition of the importation into France of certain categories of silk and cotton goods, constituting the most profitable branch of the Indian trade, acted as a deterrent to the expansion of the Company's trade. The competition of the stronger English and Dutch Companies prevented the French Company from securing a wide market for these goods outside France. Then again the Company's policy of annual sales glutted the market at one time and failed to take advantage of increased prices in times of scarcity. Finally, smuggling and other dishonest practices on the part of its agents reduced the profits of the Company.

But the most serious handicap for the Company's trade was the lack of any floating capital, which made the Company dependent on various financial expedients to meet the immediate situation. Having to face an uncertain future from day to day, the Company was not in a position to think of long-term plans or to undertake projects expected to yield rich profits in some distant future. As Barbier observes, "The actions of men who obstructed the conceptions of Dupleix can be better explained by this"[1].

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[1] Barbier--*La Compagnie Française des Indes*, p. 70.
(Revue Historique de l'Inde Française, Pondicherry, III, 1919).

[2] *Ibid*, p. 71.

The *arrêt* of 22nd March 1723 which re-constituted the Company fixed the Company's capital at 112 million livres, representing 56,000 shares (48,000 full shares of 2,000 livres each and 80,000 tenth shares of 200 livres each), the farming of tobacco which was then valued at 2½ million livres and the farming of the 'domaine d'Occident' which was taken away from the Company in 1725 for 300,000 livres. To these revenues were added in 1723 and 1724 the monopoly of the sale of coffee in France and of the issue of lotteries. The farming of tobacco was later handed over to the State for an annual payment of 9 million livres.

Down to the outbreak of the War of the Austrian Succession the Company managed to meet all expenses from these fixed revenues and the profits of commerce. But the extraordinary expenses of the war combined with its losses created a crisis for the Company in 1745. The suspension of the payment of dividends in that year first brought home to the shareholders the gravity of the situation. The payment of dividends, at a much reduced rate, was resumed in 1746. After the war the revival of trade held out hopes for the Company to be able to make good its losses and to look for better days.

But while the Company was trying to carry on by means of borrowing and other financial expedients, it found itself called upon to meet additional expenses arising out of the enterprises of Dupleix. "In these circumstances it is easy to understand that being always faced with the prospect of an immediate bankruptcy the Company showed an increasing hostility to the execution of the plans of Dupleix ...... It refused to envisage military and political projects which appeared certainly onerous for the present and with an uncertain prospect for the future"[2]. However, the condition of the Company was not wholly desperate and a few years of peace and commercial revival would have helped its recovery. But the Seven Years' War dealt it a mortal blow, from which recovery became extremely difficult, specially because of the colossal expense on the reconstruction of the settlements in India, completely destroyed by the English.

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[1] Barbier—*La Compagnie Française des Indes*, p. 77.
(Revue Historique de l'Inde Française, Pondicherry, III, 1919).

[2] *Ibid*, p. 90.

VIII. *The end of the Compagnie des Indes.*

There was, however, an earnest effort on the part of the Company to retrieve the situation. In 1764 the shareholders made a representation to the Government stating that the primary responsibility for the mismanagement and losses of the Company lay with it and praying that the Company might be freed from strict Governmental control. They secured their object partially, and by an *édit* of 1764 Governmental control was considerably relaxed and the direction of the Company re-organised. At the same time in order to secure the interests of the shareholders the Government stipulated that "a sufficient fund should be detached from that portion of the contract which was then free, to secure to every share a capital of 1,600 livres and an interest of 80 livres"[1].

The re-organised Company made strenuous efforts to put things in order. The most pressing debts were paid out of the permanent revenues, and by means of loans and lotteries sufficient money could be raised for commercial operations. In fact, the trade of the Company revived with surprising rapidity, not falling much short of the level reached in its better days. But this seeming prosperity was wholly artificial. The real position of the Company was desperate. The Company began its trading operations reckoning upon a larger capital than it really possessed. Its debts mounted rapidly. It had to face a keener competition in India from the English than before the war. Moreover, its credit in India was ruined, and it had to undertake a heavy responsibility for reconstructing and maintaining its settlements in India.

The desperate position of the Company soon attracted the attention of the Government. The Government, warned by the repeated loans floated by the Company, determined to inquire into the state of its finances. The immediate occasion for it was supplied by the Company itself. It appealed to the Government for assistance and furnished detailed statements about its financial position. The Government published the statements, and immediately the Company became the object of bitter public criticism. It may be noted that there were many in France who were strongly opposed in principle to the preservation of a monopoly Company. Others opposed the Company in the hope of getting a share of the profitable eastern trade for themselves. In the public controversy of the time the Company found an ardent supporter in Necker, later to become so celebrated as Finance Minister. The most severe critic of the Company was Abbé Morellet, a noted economist of the time. He thoroughly exposed the hopeless condition of the Company, giving full details of the Company's finances at different periods.

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[1] Abbé Raynal—*A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies* (tr. by Justamond), II, p. 382.

Morellet's forceful attack combined with public condemnation sealed the fate of the Company. The Company's term of concession was to last till 1770, but the Government suspended its privileges by a decree on the 13th August 1769. Although it did not mean permanent suppression, the shareholders of the Company deemed it prudent to liquidate the concern promptly in a manner that would secure the interests of their creditors and the remains of their own fortunes. For this purpose they offered to give up to the King all the Company's ships, thirty in number; all the warehouses and other buildings belonging to them at Lorient and in India; the property of their settlements and factories together with the manufactures dependent on them; all naval and military stores; and lastly 2450 slaves then owned by the Company. The total was valued at 30 million livres, to which the shareholders added 16½ million livres as being due to them by the Government. The King agreed to the Company's proposal, but chose to reduce the purchase money to 30 millions in all. An *édit* was issued in January 1770, creating a perpetual annuity of 1,200,000 livres upon a capital of 30 millions for the benefit of the shareholders[1].

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[1] Abbé Raynal—*A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies* (tr. by Justamond), II, pp. 391-392.

That was the end of an institution which, as Barbier notes, "was not devoid of either greatness or power and which, better directed, would have obtained immense results"[1]. That is certainly true, but as it stood after the Seven Years' War the organisation had no vitality left and was not in a position to undertake ambitious schemes for the re-establishment of French political influence in India.

IX. *The French Government after the Seven Years' War.*

If the French Company was not in a position to undertake ambitious political projects in India after the Seven Years' War, the French Government, which took over all the Company's possessions in India in 1770, was in no better position. The Government of Louis XV had neither the will nor the strength to follow a vigorous foreign policy. It was not due to the absence of any able minister, for Choiseul, who remained the leading figure in the ministry from 1758 to 1770, certainly belonged to the best tradition of French statesmanship. The real reason was the character of the administration, presided over by a dissolute king and dominated by intriguing mistresses and Court cabals who had the power of appointing and removing ministers and dictating the policy of the Government. No constructive reforms and no consistent policy in home and foreign affairs were possible under such an administration. In fact, the later period of the reign of Louis XV is remembered in history as the preparatory stage for the Revolution. As Henri Martin has summed up: "The end of the reign of Louis XV shows only ruins, which accumulate and prepare for the grand ruin: the buttresses and the outer-works have fallen; it will not take long for the main edifice to crumble down into the abyss"[2].

In spite of the losses of the Seven Years' War and internal troubles like the suppression of the Jesuits and the conflict between the Crown and the *Parlements,* French policy, both internal and external, showed surprising vigour under the able direction of Choiseul. The basis of Choiseul's policy was to prepare the country for a return match with England and to avenge the defeat and losses of the Seven Years' War. For that, he took in hand a thorough re-organisation of the army and the navy. As Martin has pointed out, it was the reforms of Choiseul which laid the foundation of the glories of French arms during the War of American Independence and the Revolution. Choiseul paid particular attention to the development of the navy, so essential in a colonial war. The French navy, which had been practically annihilated in the Seven Years' War, could boast of 64 ships of the line and 50 frigates in 1770 when Choiseul left office. Not only that, the efficiency of the officers and crews had greatly improved, the artillery of the fleet had been renewed and the arsenals and storehouses were filled with war materials. It has been said that the great expenses which Choiseul incurred for his ambitious programme of military and naval reforms contributed to the financial bankruptcy of the Government. But that is certainly not true; the cause of the financial ruin lay elsewhere, "the regime of privileges and abuses which weighed heavily on the society, and which had become, so to say, identical with the society"[1].

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[1] Barbier—*La Compagnie Française des Indes,* p. 95 (Revue Historique de l'Inde Française, Pondicherry, III, 1919).

[2] Martin—*Histoire de France,* Vol. XVI, p. 200.

In foreign policy Choiseul recast the system of alliances as dictated by the real interests of France. The Austrian alliance, which had cost France so dear in the Seven Years' War, he wanted to subordinate to the Family Compact with Spain. Spain was a more certain and natural ally and, in view of her navy and overseas territories, a more important ally in a colonial war with England. Choiseul thus endeavoured to establish closer relations with Spain, and to encourage Spain in re-organising her navy, as preparatory measures for the inevitable war with England. But his work was cut short by his sudden dismissal in 1770, ostensibly on the grounds that his support to Spain over the question of the Falkland Islands had brought France on the brink of a war with England and that he was supporting the *Parlements* then at conflict with the Crown. But the real cause of his fall was the displeasure of Madame du Barri.

Choiseul's plan relating to India deserves some notice here.

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[1] Martin—*Histoire de France*, Vol. XVI, p. 248.

Soon after the end of the Seven Years' War he started preparations for the next trial of strength with England, in which an expedition to India was to constitute an important part of the over-all French strategy. Choiseul believed that in any war with England the principal objective of France should be a direct invasion of the island. But for that invasion at least a temporary naval superiority in the Channel was an essential pre-requisite. Since even the combined forces of France and Spain were not calculated to give that superiority, it was necessary to weaken the English fleet in home waters by creating diversions in outer seas. One of these diversions was to be a threat against India, where England had such large vested interests that she could not fail to send a strong naval squadron there to ward off a French attack. The Isle of France could serve as a convenient naval and military base for a surprise attack on India, and for three years, from 1768 to 1770, a large number of troops and ships were sent there in accordance with the general plan. Thus when the Falkland Islands dispute arose between England and Spain in 1770, which seemed to bring the prospect of war very near, French preparations had already gone far for putting Choiseul's plan into execution. But a part of the French fleet at Port Louis in the Isle of France was destroyed by a storm in 1770. Shortly after, the dismissal of Choiseul led to the abandonment of his plan and the recall of most of the troops and ships from the Isle of France.[1]

The fall of Choiseul was one of the most glaring symptoms of the rot in the administration. The great minister, who had done so much to revive the power and prestige of France, was sacrificed to the whims of a woman, despite his acknowledged ability and despite the open expression of public support for him. Choiseul was dismissed and banished to his country seat of Chanteloup. "It was then that for the first time since the Fronde, a portion of the court and high society manifested publicly any formidable opposition to the government. All that was great in France made it a point of honour to go and felicitate the Duke de Choiseul in his retreat, and gave the appearance of a triumph to his disgrace"[1]. Louis XV, who so quietly yielded to the persuasion of his mistress had to repent later. When he heard of the partition of Poland, he was for a moment indignant at being counted for nothing in Europe. "Ah" he exclaimed, "if Choiseul had been here, things would have gone on otherwise".

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[1] For details regarding Choiseul's plan, see Lacour-Gayet—*La Marine militaire de la France sous Louis XV;* Castex— *Les Idées militaires de la marine ou XVIII-me siècle.* See also the Report of Capt. Lockhart Russel, 24th July 1772, on the French defences in the Isles of France and Bourbon, the plans of a French expedition to India in alliance with some of the country Powers, and the strength of the French forces in the islands even after the abandonment of Choiseul's plan. Russel had been sent by Cartier, Governor of Bengal, and he did his espionage work very well (C.R.O.—*The French in India Series,* Vol. XVII).

After the fall of Choiseul, the ministry was dominated for the remaining years of Louis XV's reign by a triumvirate, consisting of Maupeou as Chancellor, Abbé Terray in charge of Finance and Duke d'Aiguillon as Foreign Minister. Maupeou's great achievement was the abolition of an old institution of France, the *Parlements,* which in spite of serious defects constituted the only organ of opposition to royal despotism, and the creation of a new judicial organisation more subservient to the King's will. D'Aiguillon's tenure of the Foreign Office resulted in completely destroying the influence which Choiseul had built up for France in European diplomacy. Till the ministry of Vergennes France suffered a total eclipse in European politics. Poland was partitioned by Russia, Austria and Prussia and the Crimea was conquered from the Turks by Russia, with France helplessly looking on. The third member of the triumvirate, Abbé Terray, was responsible for a gross mismanagement of the finances. He had no constructive plan and his only object was to find resources by any means whatever to meet the growing expenses of the State. He made no attempt to check the monstrous extravagance of the Court and Louis XV continued to exhaust the treasury by his disgraceful prodigalities. Abbé Terray's reforms "struck at the funds of the State, and were nothing but a real and shameful bankruptcy. The assessment of the contributions was at the same time raised beyond all measure, and Terray destroyed the most glorious work of Machault, the regulation for the free circulation of grain in the interior of the kingdom. Terray abolished it for the sake of embarking in infamous speculations, of which the alarm and misery of the people guaranteed the success"[1].

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[1] **Bonnechose—*History of France,* p. 468.**

As to the King, when everything was crumbling down round him, he "continued to offer to all the spectacle of his shameful debaucheries, and the still more dangerous example of not blushing at them ...... He joined a sordid avarice to his depraved tastes, and created for himself a private wealth, which he increased by the most odious means: at a period of famine, he, as well as his minister Terray, speculated upon the misery of his people, by gambling upon the augmentation of the price of corn: at length, devoured by *ennui*, tired even of pleasures, disgusted with everything, he died of the small-pox, on the 10th May, 1774, at the age of sixty-four"[2].

X. *The Government of Louis XVI.*

The next reign began with a better augury and in the midst of high public expectations. "France expressed nothing but joy at being freed from the filthy old man who had for so long stood as the shame of the nation. Little was known about the new King, who had lived till then in seclusion, like his father before him; but it was believed that he did not resemble in any way his grandfather, and that was sufficient for the people"[3]. Louis XVI was a good and well-meaning prince and sincerely desired to abolish abuses in administration and to see France restored to a position of glory and prestige. But his greatest weakness was indecision of will, which marred the prospects of reform and hastened the Revolution. Louis XVI made a good beginning by selecting able ministers, but he failed to give them that strong and consistent support without which they could not carry out any programme of reforms. Besides, being weak in mind he allowed himself to be dominated by his wife, Marie Antoinette, who interfered in the affairs of State much in the same way and with the same results as Madame de Pompadour or Madame du Barri in the reign of Louis XV.

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[1] Bonnechose—*History of France,* p. 470.

[2] *Ibid,* p. 471.

[3] Martin—*Histoire de France,* Vol. XVI, p. 310.

On his accession Louis XVI chose as his guide old Maurepas, who in the preceding reign had been a victim to the hatred of Madame de Pompadour. Maurepas was not a great man, but he had the sagacity to choose able ministers, like Turgot for Finance, Vergennes for Foreign Affairs, Malesherbes for the King's Household and Saint-Germain for War. Vergennes, who retained charge of Foreign Affairs till his death in 1787, was an astute diplomat and knew well how to further the real interests of France, without attempting the impracticable. His policy was in fact a continuation of that of Choiseul, to avenge the defeat at the hands of England and to recover the prestige which France had lost during the Seven Years' War. Like Choiseul, he sought to weaken the Austrian connection and to strengthen the Spanish alliance. The revolt of the American colonists against the mother country gave Vergennes the opportunity for a return match with England. His diplomatic ability is proved by the fact that during this war he carefully avoided all Continental entanglements, which had crippled French efforts in the colonial struggle with England during the Seven Years' War. He also succeeded in securing a complete diplomatic isolation of England in Europe. Although in the end France did not gain much material advantage from the American War, the foreign policy of Vergennes undoubtedly restored the reputation of French arms and the prestige of France in European diplomacy.

Vergennes was ably seconded by the Minister of War, Saint-Germain and later Marquis de Ségur, and by the Minister of Marine and Colonies, de Sartine and later Castries. Naval construction, which had proceeded rapidly under Choiseul, was resumed on the eve of the American War, and by 1780 the number of ships of the line had increased to 79. After the death of Vergennes, much of the result of his diplomacy, particularly French influence in Holland, was lost by the timidity and incompetence of his successor, Montmorin. France again sank into a position of little importance in European politics, as after the fall of Choiseul.

While Vergennes was trying to restore French influence and prestige, two other able ministers, Turgot and Malesherbes, were attempting to introduce financial and other internal reforms, which, if successful, would have perhaps averted the Revolution. Turgot wanted to suppress some of the glaring abuses and burdensome privileges and to make the nobility contribute to taxes in the same proportion as the third estate. He even proposed to accustom the nation to the discussion of public interests through provincial assemblies. Malesherbes attempted the abolition of the *lettres de cachet,* which arbitrarily disposed of the liberty of citizens, and the reduction of the ruinous extravagance of the King's Household. The attack of the two ministers on privileges and vested interests led to the growth of a formidable league in the Court against them. They could have survived this opposition, in which a leading part was taken by the Queen, if they had received a strong and determined support from the King, but that could not be expected from a person like Louis XVI. Malesherbes, who realised this, resigned office in May 1776, while Turgot was dismissed two days later.

Fortunately France found another able minister in Necker, who held charge of Finance from October 1776 to May 1781. This Genevese banker had such a high reputation as a financier of talent and integrity that his name alone offered a sufficient guarantee to the capitalist class and earned the confidence of the lenders. Necker continued in a modified way the programme of reforms initiated by Turgot. His policy was based on reducing expenses to a level with receipts, relying on taxation in ordinary times and taking recourse to loans only when circumstances imperatively demanded it, and instituting regular audit of accounts to facilitate loans by creating public confidence. Necker's management of the finances proved eminently successful and provided France with the resources necessary for the American War. But the opposition of the Court cabal and of some of his own colleagues in the government undermined his position with the King and led to his resignation in May 1781 in the midst of the war.

With the fall of Necker ended all hopes of reform. He was succeeded by Joly de Fleury and later by D'Ormesson, neither of whom had any financial ability and merely tried one expedient after another without any avail. Then came the man who completed the ruin, from which there was no recovery. Calonne, a brilliant man with a light mind and an audacious character, became the Minister of Finance in 1783 on the recommendation of the Court ladies. His policy was directly opposite to that of Necker. He aimed at increasing public confidence in the financial position of the State by an artificial show of prosperity and extravagant expenditure. To keep up this show he contracted loans in a reckless manner, and then at last when he had exhausted his credit he was forced to reveal the true position. He had to admit that in a few years the loans had risen to 1640 millions and that a deficit of 150 millions existed in the revenue. This frightful revelation excited a general cry, which led to the resignation of Calonne in 1787.

Calonne had left the financial machine so hopelessly out of gear that it was impossible for anyone to set it right. For about a year Brienne tried to save the situation by new taxation, which led to a conflict with the *Parlement* of Paris (revived after the accession of Louis XVI) and raised the first demand for a States-General. Brienne ended by announcing a national bankruptcy in August 1788 and a temporary suspension of all State obligations. He was promptly dismissed and Louis XVI recalled Necker to the ministry, as the last expedient to meet a desperate situation. But then it was too late. The *Ancien Régime* had come to the brink of the abyss and was destined to disappear completely in a few months.

CHAPTER III

PONDICHERRY (1765-1778)

I. *Reconstruction after 1765.*

Following the Treaty of Paris, 1763, Pondicherry, which had been in English hands since the 16th January 1761, was restored to the French on the 11th April 1765[1]. The old town, founded by François Martin in 1674 and embellished and raised to political importance by Dupleix, had been destroyed so systematically by the English after the capitulation of 1761 that when Law de Lauriston arrived from France in 1765 to take re-possession of the place there was hardly a single house which remained intact, and it was difficult to recognise even the outlines of the old town in the heaps of ruins which lay all around. It was not only the walls, fortifications, offices and Governor's palace which had been demolished in an attempt to eliminate forever a dangerous political rival to the neighbouring English settlement of Madras, but even the houses belonging to private persons, Europeans and Indians alike, and churches were not spared from the general destruction. With the exception of two Hindu temples nothing remained to indicate the once flourishing and populous settlement[2].

Le Gentil, the French naturalist, who visited Pondicherry after its restitution compared the destruction of the place to that of Jerusalem in ancient times. The comparison was rendered more apt by the wholesale depopulation of the place. The principal officers, like Lally, were taken captive to England; some were lucky enough to escape and offer their services to Indian Princes like the Nizam and Haidar Ali; while of the other military personnel a large number accepted service under the English, in order to escape from the hardships of prison life, on condition that they would not be required to fight outside Bengal, thereby eliminating the possibility of their having to fight against France or her allies in India. Of these persons some remained faithful to the English and attained, like Claude Martin, high military ranks in the English service. But a large number, like René Madec, only looked for an opportunity to desert and offer their services to the different Princes of north India. Indeed for the next twenty-five years hundreds of French officers and soldiers were scattered over north India in the service of the Indian Princes. They were all the remnants of the army which had capitulated at Pondicherry in 1761. The civilian French population of Pondicherry took refuge for the most part in the friendly Danish settlement at Tranquebar, as also in the Dutch settlements at Sadras, Porto-Novo and Negapatam. There they remained for four years in the neighbourhood of Pondicherry, without any organisation and financial resources, and sustained only by the hope that peace would enable them to return to their old homes.

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[1] Curiously enough the records relating to the restitution of the principal settlement are not preserved in the Pondicherry Archives although there are records relating to the restitution of the other settlements.

[2] It may be noted here that Dupleix also had not treated Madras much better in 1746, against which Voltaire wrote: "This barbarism inflicted a good deal of suffering on innocent colonists without doing any good to the French". (*Précis du Siècle de Louis XV; Oeuvres Complétes.* vol. XXII, p. 259). In 1758 Lally had ordered the destruction of Fort St. David and would have dealt with Madras too in the same way if he had succeeded in capturing the place. It is better to recognise that the war between the English and the French was fought *à outrance*, each side determined to eliminate the other permanently from the coast.

When Law took over in April 1765, Pondicherry was completely in ruins and for the first few months of his administration he took up his residence in the village of Oulgaret, included in the French possessions and just a short distance to the west of the town. The other officers also were accommodated in the surrounding villages pending the reconstruction of the town. The first task of the administration was to clear the debris and erect administrative and military buildings as quickly as possible. The efforts of the administration were supplemented by the tenacity and enterprise of private persons, who now returned to Pondicherry after nearly four years of exile in the neighbouring foreign settlements. They lodged themselves in tents and improvised huts and set about re-building their houses on the old sites. The speed of reconstruction was almost a marvel, and in the course of just three years a whole new town had been built on the ruins of the old, and that in spite of the difficulties presented by lack of materials. Stones had to be procured from as far off as Jinji and wood from the Isle of France. One advantage the builders had, namely that the foundations of most of the buildings had remained intact, the English having destroyed only the walls; and the bricks from the demolished buildings were largely utilised in the work of reconstruction. Le Gentil gives us a graphic description of the work of reconstruction and of the new town as it stood in 1768, three years after the re-establishment of the French at Pondicherry[1]; and his description is fully corroborated by the accounts of Bourcet, the engineer entrusted with the work of reconstruction. "The untiring work of the French in the reconstruction of Pondicherry recalls to me the ant .... In fact even the ant is not seen to work with so much diligence as the French worked during this first period." In the course of just five months the streets had been cleared of debris, and about 200 European and 2,000 Indian houses had been built. Before the end of the first year a powder magazine had been constructed on the site of the old Fort and several warehouses and Government offices had been built.

The new town grew up within the old limits and most of the private houses were built on the old sites, but internally there were many changes in the layout of the streets and in the sites of the government buildings. The town was divided into two parts by a canal which separated the European from the Indian quarter. The first stretched from the sea to the canal, and the latter from the canal to the line of fortifications. In the centre of the European quarter was the parade ground of the old citadel. It was now planted with trees and on its four sides were erected new government buildings,—the Governor's palace and the Administrative office on the north, warehouses on the south, and military barracks on the east and west. It was in the layout of the streets that a great change was introduced. The new streets were all straight, stretching from east to west and from north to south and cutting each other at right angles. They were bordered with rows of trees and presented a pleasing view to the eye. In the work of reconstruction much attention was paid to beauty; trees were planted everywhere and gardens laid out before private houses. One interesting point that may be noticed in connection with the reconstruction of the town is that the temples and mosques that were re-built were made of a strangely low, height, because of the opposition of the Christian missionaries who did not like places of heathen worship towering above the other buildings.

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[1] *Voyage dans les mers de l'Inde.*

Together with reconstruction there was a rapid increase in the number of population. According to Le Gentil, three years after the re-establishment of the French at Pondicherry the European population numbered about 1,200, including the garrison, and the Indian population about 60,000. The principal reason for the great influx of Indian population during this period was the war in the Carnatic, which drove thousands of people from the neighbouring areas to find a secure shelter in the French settlement, Madras being regarded as insecure because of the victories of Haidar Ali against the English.

II. *Plans of fortifications.*

The re-building of the town inevitably raised the problem of security from external attacks and thoughts had to be given to the question of fortifications. The question, when it began to be tackled seriously, was complicated by the fact that houses had been built on the old sites and the interior reconstruction of the town had been going on spontaneously without any reference to the project of fortifications which might be adopted in future. It was this factor which forced the hands of the engineer entrusted with the erection of fortifications and made it necessary for him to lay down a project in conformity with the interior reconstruction which had been almost completed, and not solely in conformity with military requirements. Before the war the defence of Pondicherry was based principally on a pentagonal citadel, strong enough to resist a prolonged siege, with an outer wall round the whole town. The citadel had been completely demolished by the English, and after the war the question arose whether to base the defence of the place on a new citadel, to be constructed either in the north or in the south, or to include the entire town within a continuous and high wall defended by bastions at regular intervals. Given the same cost a citadel could be built in a more solid manner than a long line of wall all round the town. Moreover, a citadel could be effectively defended by a small garrison, whereas an open town surrounded by a long line of fortifications would require a much larger number of troops. So the question of fortifications was largely dependent on the amount of money available and on the number of troops that could be sent from France.

There was from the outset a difference of opinion between the advocates of two schools, one favouring the construction of a citadel and the other the inclusion of the entire town within a continuous line of fortifications. But the issue had to be decided by the practical necessity of circumstances, namely that the internal reconstruction had been nearly completed and any plan of defence must take within its sweep the whole of the newly-built town. There was another difference of opinion in connection with the project of fortifications. The traditionalists wanted, even if the old citadel could not be restored, to utilise as far as possible the old lines of outer fortifications; while their opponents wanted to start with a clean slate altogether, building on an entirely new plan and not taking any account of the old works. Some even proposed to shift the town wholesale to the south, utilising the Cocoanut Island in the river Ariancoupom for the purpose. Here too the issue had to be decided by the necessity of circumstances, since the town had already been reconstructed and there was thus no question of changing the site.

At the time of leaving France Law de Lauriston was given an experienced engineer named Bourcet. In 1766 Bourcet submitted his plan of fortifications, which, as he estimated, could be executed in two to three years' time and at a very small cost, not more than three million livres (or twelve lakhs of rupees). His plan was based on the following considerations: (1) the reconstruction of the town had already been completed, and it was necessary therefore to enclose the whole of it within the line of fortifications to be built; the enclosure of a large area was all the more necessary in order to provide a safe shelter to the workers engaged in the manufacture of commodities for the trade of the French Company; (2) speed in construction was essentially necessary, since nobody knew how long the French would be left at peace either by the English or by the country Powers; and (3) both from the point of view of speed as well as that of economy, the new fortifications should follow as far as possible the lines of the old, so that full use could be made of the old ditch surrounding the town and as much of the glacis as remained, and even the materials of the new works could be largely taken from the ruins of the old.

But Bourcet, who had the full confidence of Law, was on that account opposed by the *Conseil Supérieur* under the leadership of Bovelleau during Law's absence from Pondicherry. The *Conseil Supérieur* represented to the Company in Paris that the execution of Bourcet's project would require an expenditure of sixteen million livres. This wide difference between the estimates of Bourcet and of the *Conseil Supérieur* puzzled the authorities in France, and instead of sanctioning Bourcet's plan they sent some new projects for the consideration of the Pondicherry Government. Thus much valuable time was unnecessarily lost and in a *mémoire* writen at the end of 1767 Law noted with regret, "It will require at least two years to have any definite replies, and during this interval to what dangers may we not be exposed, specially with the handful of men and the small quantity of arms and ammunitions that we have?"[1] In fact, as we shall notice later, it was the procrastinating policy of the Paris authorities which led to repeated delays and changes of plan, with the result that even thirteen years after the restitution of the place when the English began their attack in August 1778, the defensive works had not yet been completed and the French were left to fill in the gaps with hasty and improvised constructions.

In the *mémoire* referred to above, Law expressed his opinion that while the *Conseil Supérieur* had greatly over-estimated the cost without taking into account that much of the materials would be taken from the old works, Bourcet on the other hand had slightly under-estimated it and that the real cost would be in the neighbourhood of five million livres. Anyway, in 1768 Bourcet's plan was accepted and he started the work in 1769. The plan consisted of the construction of a high and wide wall, mostly earthwork for speed and economy without losing any effective capacity for resistance, to be defended by bastions at regular intervals on three sides, north, west and south. The east was protected by the sea and the south by the river Ariancoupom; and Bourcet provided in his plan for inundating the land outside the walls on the west and the north, to be connected with the river and the sea, in order to provide greater security to the town. In the course of the year 1769, apart from the wall of earthwork, Bourcet had constructed to a considerable height four bastions on the north, and one on the south.

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[1] P.A. ms. 100.

The work was in fact proceeding very rapidly when there came a sudden set-back. The opponents of Bourcet's plan raised a clamour that the hastily constructed earthworks would be washed away by the rains and that the vast extent of the area of the fortifications would require a much larger garrison for defence than what Pondicherry could ever possibly have. Added to this clamour was a personal quarrel between Bourcet and some members of the *Conseil,* and all these resulted in the sudden recall of Bourcet and his replacement by another engineer from France, named Desclaisons. This sudden change had the effect of undoing all the work that had been done before, for Desclaisons at once abandoned the plan of Bourcet and proceeded to erect fortifications in a more solid manner. He expressed contempt for the earthwork raised by Bourcet and started construction with brick and lime. Then again he was dissatisfied with the plan of the bastions, already constructed to a considerable height by Bourcet, and thought it necessary to pull them down before erecting new ones on his own lines. All these entailed a huge expenditure and what was more important required at least twenty years of peace, while both money and materials were lacking and Pondicherry ran a great risk in keeping itself exposed to external attacks for such a long period. Law, who was fully alive to the danger of the situation, made strong representations to Paris against Desclaisons and finally secured his recall in 1771. Thus the work was held up again till the return of Bourcet in 1775.

After the recall of Desclaisons the matter was considered afresh by the Minister of Marine, de Boynes. Finally, Bourcet was sent back to continue the work he had already started. It was not an easy task for him since some of his work had been undone by Desclaisons. Anyway, in 1775 he constructed three bastions on the west and one on the south. Further, he installed a battery to guard the eastern side. But the work was again held up by the death of Bourcet at the end of 1776. Just before his death Bourcet drew up a detailed *mémoire,* dated October 1776, relating to the fortifications of Pondicherry, which according to his desire was submitted by his brother to the new Governor, Bellecombe, in January 1777.[1] The brother of Bourcet submitted a *mémoire* of his own also to Bellecombe at the same time.[2] In 1776 controversy had again been raised at Pondicherry and in France as to the utility of Bourcet's plan of fortifications, and the two *mémoires* were written with a view to justify the plan. They give us a detailed account of the defensive works already constructed. The controversy, however, went on for some time and little was done to continue the work of construction begun by Bourcet, until the storm apprehended by Law burst in July 1778. It was only when the English troops began to move against Pondicherry that Bellecombe hurriedly called upon Dulac, the successor of Bourcet, to fill in the gaps in the line of fortifications. But it was then too late, and the fall of Pondicherry after a short siege may be attributed largely to the dilatory policy of the Paris authorities and their indecision and change of plan, although the French had sufficient time after 1765 to put their principal settlement in India in a proper state of defence.[3]

III. *Organisation of the Army.*

Related to the subject of fortifications was the question of troops and their organisation, since, as we have seen, the adoption of Bourcet's plan required the maintenance of a very large garrison. Here too there was the same neglect and procrastination on the part of the Company's authorities and the French Government alike. The number of European troops

[1] P.A. ms. 230.

[2] *Ibid,* ms. 237.

[3] For an account of the different plans of fortifications, see *Catalogue des cartes, plans et projets d'etudes du depot des anciennes archives de l'Inde* by Major H. G. Tranchell.

sent out to Pondicherry was far too inadequate, and because of lack of funds and arms little attempt could be made in India to raise and train up a large sepoy force to make up for the deficiency in the European element. In the correspondence of the two successive Governors, Law and Bellecombe, who had charge of the Pondicherry Government from 1765 to 1778, we find repeated representations to Paris for permission and necessary funds to raise a large body of sepoy troops well in advance of the next outbreak of war. But both the authorities of the Company and, after the suppression of that body, the French Government were lamentably slow to appreciate its necessity, believing that the exigencies of a war in India could be met when it actually broke out by the despatch of an expeditionary force from France and that there was no necessity of making preparations in advance.

Writing two and a half years after the restitution of Pondicherry, Law regretted that there were only "500 European soldiers, of whom at least 130 invalids, the majority being disabled for service, and 400 sepoys recruited last year who hardly know yet how to load their guns; it will require much before they can be put man for man on a footing of equality with those of foreigners. They have not even been organised in a manner that I would have liked, having been raised during my absence and with the greatest precipitation on account of the general discontent which the imprudence of M. Boyelleau had caused here."[1] As regards arms Law gave an equally dismal picture: "We are very weak in artillery and musketry. Forty pieces of cannon, six to twenty-four pounders, of which several very bad and all very badly mounted, constitute all the defence of the place. The guns of our soldiers are good, those of our sepoys are very old. That is all our musketry. There is not a single spare gun in the arsenal so that we do not know how to arm the employees and the inhabitants". Much information is available about the Company's military forces in India and of the expenses incurred on them from a detailed list drawn up in 1769 and preserved in the Pondicherry Archives.[2] The list was drawn up in all probability in view of the replacement of the Company's by Royal Administration in 1770. The infantry was organised in one battalion, known as the 'Battalion of India', divided into 10 companies. At Pondicherry there were 40 officers, including the *État Major,* and 560 men. There was also a company of artillery consisting of 100 men including officers, about half being stationed at Pondicherry. The sepoy forces were organised in 6 companies of 100 men each including officers.

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[1] P.A. ms. 100.

[2] *Ibid,* ms. 133.

A great change in military organisation followed the establishment of Royal Administration in 1770. By a Royal Ordinance, dated 30th December 1772, the Battalion of India was replaced by the Regiment of Pondicherry.[1] It was divided into two battalions, each consisting of 9 companies, one of grenadiers and eight of fusiliers. Some time later the artillery force was also re-organised. There were after 1770 two separate companies of artillery, one belonging to the Royal Corps and another attached to the old Battalion of India. By a Royal Ordinance of 3rd February 1776 the two separate companies were amalgamated and formed into one autonomous artillery company of gunners and bombardiers.[2] The organisation of the sepoy force also underwent a change. By a Provisional Regulation, dated 12th November 1773, Law re-constituted the sepoy force into one battalion of 11 companies, one of grenadiers and 10 of fusiliers. One curious innovation that Law introduced was that one company was to consist wholly of pariahs or outcastes converted to Christianity.[3] The motive we cannot guess; it might have been his dislike to mix up castes in the army, not unlikely to cause resentment among the upper-caste men; or it might have been his belief that the Christian pariahs would be more loyal than other Indians. However, the innovation was abolished by a Royal Ordinance dated January 20, 1776, which stipulated that men "of all religions shall be admitted into service, without any distinction or pre-eminence of one sect over another. His Majesty desires that never shall any separation by sect or caste be made in the Company but that they be mixed up indistinctly as loyal soldiers of one and the same King."[1]

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[1] P.A. ms. 172.
[2] *Ibid,* ms. 222.
[3] *Ibid,* ms. 183.

After the fall of Pondicherry in 1761 a large number of Frenchmen belonging to the armed forces were scattered all over India and took to the career of military adventurers in the service of the various Indian Princes. They were technically deserters from the French army, but in view of the inadequate strength of the garrison at Pondicherry it was thought desirable to take them back into service again. Moreover, many of them had shown great organising ability, had risen to positions of eminence and power and had acquired great influence over the country Powers; their re-admission into service would have been of inestimable value in any military operations in India. So a Royal *Arrêt* of January 13, 1776 declared a general amnesty for all these deserters and efforts were made to give it due publicity in different parts of India.[2] But this declaration of amnesty produced little effect, and as the *mémoires* of Law testify, few of the Frenchmen in the service of the Indian Princes cared to avail themselves of this opportunity to rejoin the service of their nation. The thing was that in spite of the patriotic sentiments of many of them they did not like to give up their positions in the service of the Indian Princes, where they were perfectly happy, earning more money and enjoying more authority than what they could have expected in the French army at Pondicherry.

IV. *System of Civil Administration.*

In the administrative organisation a sharp dividing line was marked by the suppression of the Company and the establishment of Royal Administration in 1770. Both before and after this date the system was defective and gave rise to numerous practical difficulties in the conduct of governmental affairs. The defects of the system of administration under the Company were brought out most clearly by Law in his *mémoire* of 1767.[3] The administration of all the French possessions in India was vested in a *Conseil Supérieur* having its permanent seat at

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[1] P.A. ms. 217.

[2] *Ibid*, ms. 215.

[3] *Ibid*, ms. 100.

Pondicherry since 1701. Prior to that date the *Conseil Supérieur* had been established at Surat. It was both an administrative as well as a judicial body. At the head of the Council was the Governor, appointed by the King, although responsible to the Company for the conduct of affairs in India. The number of members of the Council was not fixed. Like the Governor, all the members were appointed by the King. They did not all reside at Pondicherry but were posted in the different settlements. At Chandernagore there were several such members and they had the exclusive right to form the local Council, headed by the *Commandant*. At other places, like Mahé, Karikal, Yanam etc., only the Chief of the settlement was a member of the *Conseil Supérieur,* the other members of the local Council being ordinary employees of the Company. All official communications from Paris were first received at Pondicherry and then forwarded to the settlements directly dependent on Pondicherry, and these in turn sent them on to subordinate factories, where they existed, as in Bengal.

The Governor was not endowed with any authority to override the Council. When Law came out to India in 1765, he came in the additional capacity of a Royal Commissar for taking possession of the French settlements in India from the hands of the English, and so far as that special mission was concerned the instructions of the King gave him absolute authority. But later in his ordinary capacity of Governor and President of the *Conseil Supérieur* he was bound by the decision of a majority of the Council and was not permitted to do anything on his own authority. This restriction was often vexatious, specially in dealing with the country Powers. Law sent repeated representations against it and wanted overriding authority with respect to certain matters. Another inconvenience against which Law complained was dual responsibility,—to the Minister and to the authorities of the Company. The Governor "must undoubtedly be in correspondence with the Minister and as a consequence in the case of receiving orders (from him) of which the Company may well have no knowledge at all and which may even be opposed to their intention, it is easy to see the embarrassment which results for him. This embarrassment does not arise from any uncertainty as to which to obey, the order of the Minister or that of the Company, but to find some means to defend himself before the Syndics and the Directors, to whom he is responsible for his conduct. If the Minister happens to change he is left without any support. This difficulty..... is not one of the least that M. Dupleix had to encounter."

The Company was suppressed in 1770 and all its possessions in India were taken over by the King. For nearly three years the administrative system remained as before with only a few changes necessitated by the transfer of authority. But with the appointment of Foucault as *Intendant* and *Commissaire-Ordonnateur* and his arrival at Pondicherry in October 1773 the administrative system underwent a complete change. The possessions in India were brought under the same form of government as existed in the other colonies of France. The executive power was divided into two hands, the Governor and the *Intendant*, each supreme in his own sphere and not dependent on the other. The former was entrusted with political and military affairs. Relieved of administrative duties, his sole concern was to deal with the country Powers. The *Intendant* was entrusted with the whole civil administration, including finance, police, justice, shipping and commerce. Neither the Governor nor the *Intendant* was fettered in his sphere of action by the majority opinion of the *Conseil Supérieur,* since that body was deprived of all administrative power and converted into a purely judicial tribunal with the *Intendant* as the President. The defects of this system of government and the complications it gave rise to were stated in detail by Law in a lengthy *mémoire* dated January 21, 1776.[1] Law disclosed that soon after the transfer of authority in 1770 he had sent a proposal to France for the establishment of a small consultative committee in place of the old *Conseil Supérieur,* with power to the Governor to override the decision of the majority if he thought it necessary. In 1773 he objected to the introduction of a colonial form of government in India, but his warning about the possible difficulties that might arise were not heeded in France and the change was effected in October of the same year with the arrival of the first *Intendant* and *Ordonnateur,* Foucault.

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[1] P.A. ms. 216.

In his *mémoire* of 1776 Law criticised the new administrative system on several grounds. In the first place, the colonial form of government was wholly unsuitable to Indian possessions, since the circumstances in India were entirely different and it was necessary for the government to deal with a large alien population and maintain political relations with the country Powers. Secondly, the division of authority between the Governor and the *Intendant,* with little interconnection between them, was bound to lead to confusion, since many of the functions given to both were allied and could not be performed in isolation. In case of a difference of opinion between the Governor and the *Intendant* there would be a complete deadlock, which could be resolved only by a positive order from Paris, but that would take time and much harm might be caused during the interval. The danger would be specially great in a time of war, and military operations would be paralysed if the Governor had constantly to dispute with the *Ordonnateur* for money and supplies. Thirdly, in the division of authority the Governor had been relegated for all practical purposes to a position of secondary importance. He was not given any share in the civil administration and had thus no control over the administrative personnel. All branches of civil government, like justice, police, finance, shipping and commerce, were exclusively under the control of the *Intendant.* Even in the sphere of jurisdiction of the Governor the *Intendant* had effective power of control since finance was in his hands, and by simply refusing to supply money he could prevent the Governor from pursuing a policy in political and military affairs not liked by him. Lastly, the possible intention for the introduction of the administrative change was to increase the importance of the Governor in the eyes of the country Powers by giving him full authority in political and military affairs unfettered by any committee and relieving him of the cares of ordinary administrative duties. But in reality the effect was just the opposite, as the country Powers were shrewd enough to detect the powerlessness of the Governor and the real importance of the *Intendant,* thus giving them full opportunity to exploit the division of authority to their own advantage. Law concluded his *mémoire* by stating, "the manner in which the machine is set up today does not make it possible in a country like this for two brothers, even twins, to work in concert, unless one of them is determined to pass over blindly whatever the other wishes."

V. *Economic Condition.*

Let us turn next to the economic situation in the settlement. Pondicherry had one great advantage for trade and commerce, namely the roadstead, which was one of the best on the eastern coast. The principal articles of merchandise in this region for European trade were cotton goods of various kinds. As Law stated in his *mémoire* of 1767, in normal times when there was no political disturbance in the surrounding area, and provided the English did not put any undue restrictions on French trade through the Nawab of the Carnatic, the French could procure goods for export worth two million livres from the neighbourhood of Pondicherry, and if their other two settlements were included, namely Yanam and Masulipatam, the total export trade of the eastern coast could be valued at four million livres[1]. That was the maximum that the French export trade could amount to, but to reach it two essential conditions were required, besides absence of political disturbances and freedom from interference by the English. The first was that the French must be in a position to advance sufficient money to the weavers at least eight months earlier; and the second was that they must bring a large quantity of money from Europe, since the total value of the sale of their European goods on the eastern coast did not exceed one million livres, just only a quarter of the value of their probable export trade. But because of the financial distress of the French Company after 1765 these two conditions were lacking and, as Law stated, for the remaining period of the Company's life the export trade was consequently limited to two million livres per year, and that also with the greatest difficulty. In France there was an impression that if the Company's commercial monopoly was abolished and the trade of India thrown open to private merchants, more capital would be attracted and there would be a great improvement in the trade between France and India. Accordingly the monopoly right of the Company was suspended in September 1769; and, after a long controversy in France, in August 1770 the Company was suppressed altogether, the administration of its territories passed into the hands of the King and the trade of India was thrown open.

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[1] Roughly one rupee was equivalent to 2½ livres at the time.

But this measure far from improving the situation made it even worse. In the first year of the suppression of the Company the value of the French trade at Pondicherry fell to half the previous amount, although in the succeeding years it recovered to some extent. In fact, after 1770 followed a period of acute financial distress at Pondicherry, with no money even to pay the civil and military employees and to purchase provisions for the inhabitants. One important reason was the defective system of collecting revenues. Under the Company's administration all the sources of revenue like land, betel, tobacco, alcohol, customs both by land and sea etc. were farmed out to private persons, mostly Indians, and in some cases connected with the administrative officials including the Governor. Law stated in his *mémoire* of 1767 that the total revenue from all sources amounted to 80,000 rupees or 200,000 livres, just one fifth of the amount required to meet the current expenditure. After 1770 there was an increase in the yield of revenue, but the increase in expenditure was even greater. The payment of salaries was often in arrears, and even the construction of fortifications was held up for lack of funds. One important result of the financial distress at Pondicherry and of the decline in trade and commerce was the rapid exodus of the Indian population from the town. As we have seen, soon after the re-establishment of the French at Pondicherry, the Indian population there rose to 60,000. According to Bourcet, the engineer, who took a careful statistics of population, cattle etc., towards the end of Law's administration the number of Indian inhabitants declined to 27,000. As Mme Labernadie has expressed: "Like rats leaving a sinking vessel the natives began to withdraw from a town which disappointed their hopes and which did not assure them either work or security."[1]

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[1] Labernadie—*Le Vieux Pondichéry*, p. 347.

VI. *Appointment of Bellecombe as Governor, 1777.*

In January 1777 Law was succeeded by Bellecombe as Governor of Pondicherry. The new appointment coincided with a fresh vigour in French colonial policy. Throughout the period of Law's administration at Pondicherry the policy of the French Government was one of total indifference to the future of the Indian possessions. All the diplomatic *mémoires* of Law for the building up of an anti-English coalition of the Indian Powers were quietly shelved in Paris, and his repeated demands for men and money for the defence of Pondicherry and the other settlements were equally ignored. The French Government had fallen into a kind of stupor in the closing years of the reign of Louis XV, from which it began to recover slowly only after the accession of Louis XVI. The improvement became specially noticeable after de Sartine assumed charge of the Ministry of Marine and Colonies in 1776. While on the one hand measures were taken to improve the state of the navy, an essential pre-requisite for any colonial effort, on the other the diplomatic *mémoires* submitted to the Minister came to receive more and more attention, and for the first time the authorities evinced an earnestness to restore French influence in India. The War of American Independence came as a lucky opportunity for France to re-open the conflict with the English, without which nothing could be done to improve the French position in India.

But the French Government did not move fast enough to keep pace with the rapid drift of circumstances in Europe. It took such a long time in going through, slowly and cautiously, all the diplomatic and military projects submitted by officials, that when hostilities actually broke out in Europe in 1778, it had not yet come to any decision regarding the diplomatic and military actions to be taken in India. Not only had it not taken any step to establish a ring of alliances in India; what was still more unfortunate, it had even neglected to take the necessary precautions to meet a sudden attack on the Indian possessions by improving their defences.

The arrival of Bellecombe with two men-of-war and assurances of a vigorous action on the part of France raised high hopes in all the French settlements in India, but, as it actually turned out, when hostilities started all on a sudden in August 1778, the French were not even prepared to defend their own possessions. For this *débacle* no blame attaches to Bellecombe, who did all that he could to urge upon the Government in Paris the necessity of sending immediate reinforcements of men, money and materials to put the French possessions in India in a proper state of defence, and the need of taking active steps for the formation of alliances with important country Powers, like Haidar Ali and the Marathas. Anybody who takes the trouble of going through the *mémoires* of Bellecombe will appreciate his political judgment and foresight and his earnest efforts to improve the French position in India. Although he did not have any previous knowledge of the Indian political situation, he took little time to learn all the intricacies of the problem from his predecessor in office, Law de Lauriston, whose presence at Pondicherry, even after laying down the reins of office, was of inestimable value to his successor. He purposely went to Mahé to meet Haidar Ali personally in order to smooth over the recent difficulties created by the imprudent actions of Duprat and Repentigny and to establish cordial relations with him, preliminary to the conclusion of a solid political and military alliance. It was entirely due to the slowness of the Government in Paris to adopt a definite policy with respect to India and its failure to take prompt steps to improve the defences of the Indian possessions that when war broke out again rather suddenly in 1778, the French in India were taken completely by surprise. No Indian Power moved to their assistance, and all their settlements fell into the hands of the English without any resistance, except Pondicherry which stood a siege for 77 days.

VII. *Outbreak of war and preparations for defence.*

It has been noticed already that there was a fresh vigour in French foreign policy with the accession of Louis XVI in contrast to the later years of the reign of Louis XV. The outbreak of the War of American Independence was looked upon by France as a lucky opportunity to take revenge on her traditional colonial rival. She began to give secret help to the colonists from the beginning of their revolt against the mother country, and early in 1778 she formally recognised the independence of the Colonies and openly joined the war against England.

The first rumours of the outbreak of war between England and France reached Pondicherry about the end of June 1778 through letters arriving by way of Suez. Early in July Bellecombe, taken by surprise by these rumours, wrote to the Madras Government to ascertain the real position. The English reply was couched in vague terms, but Bellecombe understood and at once started making hasty preparations to put the town in a proper state of defence. The task was difficult indeed, considering the incomplete state of the fortifications and the inadequacy of troops and arms. Thanks to the constant change of plans and the negligence of the French Government to send money, in July 1778 Pondicherry was in a fully exposed condition. There were large gaps in the line of fortifications; the ditch intended to surround the town on the north and west had been dug in a haphazard manner with unequal depths, which at places did not go beyond just one foot; of the thirteen bastions planned to guard the three sides of the town, north, west and south, only five were in a tolerable state; and none of the four batteries to defend the eastern side was ready for action. The garrison consisted of 568 men of the Regiment of Pondicherry, 153 men of the artillery, and 428 sepoys, with 141 pieces of cannon of all calibres.[1] They were wholly inadequate to defend the long line of fortifications extending to nearly five miles in circumference. Moreover, there were not even adequate stocks of provisions in the town to last a prolonged siege, although repeated warnings had been given earlier in numerous *mémoires* to the French Government to lay in stocks for one full year, since in case of a war with the English the whole of the Carnatic would become enemy territory and the food supplies to Pondicherry would at once be cut off.

It was in this perilous condition that Bellecombe received the reply of the Madras Government on the 13th July 1778, which, though vague, confirmed his suspicion about the state of war between the two nations, and he immediately set about making preparations for defence as best as he could. He called upon Dulac, the chief engineer, to complete the fortifications interrupted after the death of Bourcet. Nearly 5,000 men were hastily collected and put on the work, and in the course of the month, by strenuous efforts, Dulac succeeded in filling up the gaps in the line, improving the bastions, digging the ditch in a regular way, and clearing the land outside the line of fortifications up to a considerable distance. At the same time Bellecombe took prompt measures to increase the number of troops, both European and Indian. All the European citizens were armed and two new corps were raised, one of the higher bourgeoisie, of 56 men, and another of the lower bourgeoisie, of 55 men. Horses were purchased from private persons and a small corps of Dragons, numbering only 17, was organised and placed under the command of Madec, who had left north India in disappointment and had been living at Pondicherry, waiting to return to France. There were also raised a corps of Topasses (of mixed Portuguese-Indian origin) for the artillery and another for the infantry. A sepoy force of 249 men was raised from the Palli caste and placed under the command of du Saussoir. Sepoy troops were also recruited from other ranks, and we know from a record in the Pondicherry Archives that one Nalletambyrao presented himself with 150 men and was at once appointed by Bellecombe as captain of that company.[1] Further, on the news of the danger to Pondicherry, de Boistel, the Chief at Karikal, evacuated that place and arrived with his small contingent of 12 European troops, 109 sepoys, 16 Topasses and a few pieces of cannon.

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[1] Labernadie—*Le Vieux Pondichéry*, p. 352.

Thus when the English forces first came within sight of Pondicherry and encamped on the heights of Périmbé (Red Hill) on the 8th August, the French had put themselves under a sufficient cover against any surprise attack and had increased their garrison to 988 Europeans and 1,153 sepoys, including

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[1] P. A. ms. 307.

Topasses.[1] They also took care to lay in stocks of provisions as much as they could from the neighbouring areas, taking advantage of the month's time that they got before the appearance of the English forces before Pondicherry, which cut off all further supplies. When the English began their attack, the French had sufficient troops, provisions, munitions and money to hold on for a few months, till at least the expected reinforcements from the Isle of France arrived.

Bellecombe was rather fortunate in that just at this moment of crisis for Pondicherry there was a small French naval squadron in Indian waters under the command of Tronjoly, recently arrived from the Isle of France. To the King's ships under the command of Tronjoly Bellecombe added a few private vessels, which he acquired and armed for naval action. Thus the French had a respectable looking squadron, superior in fact to the English naval forces in Indian waters at the time, both in men and in guns. The French squadron consisted of the *Brillant* (64), the *Pourvoyeuse* (40), the *Sartine* (24), the *Lauriston* (24) and the *Brisson* (26); while the English squadron under Sir Edward Vernon consisted of the *Ripon* (60), the *Coventry* (28), the *Cormorant* (14), the *Seahorse* (24) and the *Valentine* (24), the last two being Company's vessels armed for war. For the French, therefore, the military prospect at the beginning of August was not altogether discouraging. They had the means to defend themselves on land, and on the sea they had even a slight superiority over the English.

Everything, however, depended on the continued presence of their naval squadron in Indian waters. If the French could inflict a defeat on the English at sea, it would not only ensure the safety of Pondicherry, but would even enable them to take

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[1] European troops:

Regiment of Pondicherry ...	671
Artillery	163
Dragons	17
Upper bourgeoisie ...	56
Lower bourgeoisie ...	55
Sailors and gunners ...	26
	988

Indian troops:

Sepoys of the garrison ...	428
Sepoys from Karikal ...	109
New recruits	236
Sepoys of the Palli caste ...	249
Topasses (Infantry) ...	66
Negroes and Topasses (artillery)	65
	1,153

(Labernadie—*Le Vieux Pondichéry*, p. 353.)

the offensive and attack some English possessions on the coast. Even if the English squadron could not be defeated, the mere presence of the French ships before Pondicherry would prevent the English from pressing their attack by land. The roads were difficult, and the only way of transporting provisions and munitions for a close and prolonged investment of Pondicherry was by sea, and that route would be closed to the English as long as Tronjoly remained before Pondicherry. The key to the defence of Pondicherry, therefore, was the presence of Tronjoly's ships. The French could at least hold on till the arrival of reinforcements from the Isle of France. To strengthen the navy Bellecombe gave large quantities of munitions and 800 men from the garrison to Tronjoly. The latter was asked to attack the English fleet *à outrance* and under no circumstances to copy the example of d'Aché, whose sudden departure from the coast had left Lally without any naval support and contributed to the defeat of the French in the previous war.

Tronjoly encountered the English squadron not far from Pondicherry on the 10th August. The action was lively and lasted for two hours, but the result was indecisive. One of the French ships, the *Sartine,* was captured by the enemy, but on the whole the English suffered more damage to their ships and more casualties among their men than the French; and if the French squadron had been led by a more daring commander like de Suffren, he would have pursued the English and turned the indecisive action into a victory. But Tronjoly was too old and timid, and thought it prudent to retire to Pondicherry. There he landed the killed and the wounded, numbering 88, and then fearing further encounters with the English fleet he decided to leave the coast and return to the Isle of France. Bellecombe assured him that he would not ask him for further action against the English fleet and implored him just to remain before Pondicherry under the protection of the coast batteries. But nothing could persuade Tronjoly to change his mind, and on the morning of the 21st he suddenly left Pondicherry with his ships without even the courtesy of leave-taking.[1] The people of Pondicherry could not believe at first that Tronjoly had finally left the coast, and it was not till a few days later that they realised that Tronjoly had copied the example of d'Aché in 1759.

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[1] For a different version of the naval action and an explanation of the conduct of Tronjoly see Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond—*The Navy in India,* 1763-1783, pp. 82-84.

The action of Tronjoly was, in fact, still more criminal than that of d'Aché, since he even took away with him the huge quantities of munitions and the 800 men given to him by Bellecombe. If he had returned the munitions and the men, it would have considerably strengthened the defence of Pondicherry. In his official report to the Minister about the incident Bellecombe vehemently complained against the conduct of Tronjoly and bitterly regretted having given him, in full faith, munitions and men which weakened the defence of the town.[1] In another letter to the Minister, dated 2nd January 1779[2], Bellecombe reported the arrival on the 16th November (1778) of a frigate, the *Subtile*, sent by the Governor of the Isle of France with reinforcements for Pondicherry. But it was then too late, as Pondicherry had capitulated a month earlier. Bellecombe attributed the fall of Pondicherry entirely to the conduct of Tronjoly. If the latter had just remained on the coast without even fighting against the English fleet, it would have enabled Bellecombe to hold on till the arrival of reinforcements from the Isle of France. Pondicherry could have been saved if the French ships had just remained on the coast till October, when the expected monsoon would have compelled the English to withdraw their forces. In fact, therefore, it was the sudden departure of Tronjoly which sealed the fate of Pondicherry.

VIII. *Siege of Pondicherry and Capitulation.*

The English forces under the command of Sir Hector Munro, encamped on the heights of Périmbé (Red Hill), to the west of Pondicherry, on the 8th August. They consisted of 2100 Europeans, including artillery, 20 field-pieces, 10 battalions of sepoys, and 2 regiments of cavalry. The English General sent a summons to Pondicherry to surrender, to which Bellecombe gave a spirited reply that he took the summons to be just a military convention and not indicating any hope in the mind of the English General that it would be accepted. It caused, in fact, not a little surprise to Munro, as he knew the weak state of Pondicherry's defences and did not expect much resistance from the French. In spite however of their overwhelming superiority in number, the English forces kept themselves at a respectful distance from the limits of Pondicherry as long as Tronjoly with his squadron remained before that place. Their principal difficulty was that they could not bring up their supplies of provisions and munitions quickly on account of the bad condition of the roads. The quickest and the easiest route of transport was the sea, which was closed to them by the presence of Tronjoly's squadron.

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[1] A. N.—Ministère des Colonies: C2—152, p. 293.

[2] A. N.—Ministière de la Marine: B-4, CL, p. 169.

The departure of Tronjoly from the coast gave the English their opportunity to bring up supplies by sea and to form a closer ring round Pondicherry. Their forces on the heights of Périmbé immediately advanced and encamped near the limits of the town. The English squadron also, freed from all danger, landed troops and supplies at Sadras and Cuddalore, to the north and south of Pondicherry. For want of a fleet the French remained only helpless spectators and could do nothing even to prevent the concentration of enemy troops on the banks of the Ariancoupom. In the north the English set up four batteries close to the town to bombard the *Bastion nord-ouest* and the *Bastion de Madras.* In the first week of September the ring closed in upon Pondicherry. The English set up batteries in the south and west as well, and their squadron threatened the sea-front protected by feeble and improvised works. On the 8th September began a vigorous cannonade on the town from three sides. Some of the bastions were badly shaken, particularly the *Bastion de l'Hopital* in the south-east, and several breaches were made in the walls.

The position of the besieged was daily growing more precarious. They had not the means to prevent the landing of fresh troops and supplies close to the town, and their garrison was much too inferior in number to make a determined sortie and drive out the enemy forces from their positions. The only thing that they could do was to engage the besieging forces in surprise raids and skirmishes, and to resist the besiegers as long as possible from within their line of fortifications; but even that period of resistance was limited by their depleted stocks of munitions and provisions. Capitulation was only a question of time, unless Pondicherry could hold on till the setting in of the rainy season in October when the besieging forces would be compelled to withdraw. But, as it actually turned out, even the weather was unfavourable to the French, and the rains started much later than the usual time.

Yet, in spite of the bleak prospect, the small French garrison at Pondicherry put up a surprisingly stubborn resistance, which won the unstinted admiration of the English General. The hero of the skirmishes outside the fortifications was Madec, who was given a Captain's commission by Bellecombe and placed in charge of the small group of cavalry. Within the town both Bellecombe and his predecessor in office, Law de Lauriston, showed great courage and untiring energy, inspiring the garrison to hold on at all costs and organising defence at every vulnerable point. In the course of his constant visits to the fortifications Bellecombe even received a bullet wound, from which, however, he quickly recovered. But by the middle of October munitions had run short, only three barrels of powder remained, and further resistance was impossible. Bellecombe bitterly regretted having given large quantities of munitions to Tronjoly, which at this critical moment would have enabled the garrison to hold on for some time more. But mere regret could not change the military situation. The artillery had been for the most part silenced, several of the bastions were in ruins, the ramparts crumbling and the garrison completely worn down by 77 days of continuous action.

On the 15th October Bellecombe resigned himself to the inevitable and called a council of war, consisting of the *Intendant* and senior civil and military officers. The decision was unanimous, to stop further resistance and to capitulate on terms honourable to the nation. The next two days, 16th and 17th October, were taken up by negotiations. On the 18th the capitulation was signed. The terms were the most honourable that any garrison under similar circumstances could extort from the besiegers.[1] The victors expressed their appreciation of the courageous defence of Pondicherry in the following terms: "The brave defence made by Major General Bellecombe and his garrison deserves, with reason all the marks of honour. That is why it is permitted to the garrison to march out through the Vilnoor gate with the honours of war; arriving on the glacis the men will put down arms in bundles at the command of their own officers, and will also leave there the drums, cannons and mortars. It is permitted to all officers in general to keep their arms, and on the special demand of General Bellecombe the Regiment of Pondicherry will keep its colours". By the terms of capitulation all the French officers and men with their families and belongings were to be sent to the Isle of France. The English promised to take care of the wounded left behind and to preserve the right of private Frenchmen to live in the town and carry on trade and commerce. It is to be noted that the engagements were scrupulously observed by the English. On the afternoon of the 18th the Vilnoor gate was thrown open, the French garrison marched out and 6000 English troops entered and occupied the town. The English were so much surprised at the small number of the garrison, only 493 European troops, that they suspected large numbers to be in hiding in private houses, and their suspicion was not dispelled till they had carried out extensive searches all over the town for the next few days.

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[1] P. A. ms. 309 (terms of capitulation). A plan of Pondicherry in 1778 and an account of the siege will be found in Vibart's *History of the Madras Engineers*, pp. 130-135.

CHAPTER IV

OTHER FRENCH SETTLEMENTS (1765-1778)

Chandernagore

I. *Condition in 1765.*

The settlement at Chandernagore was founded by Bourreau-Deslandes in 1690.[1] But it was not till the Governorship of Dupleix (1731-1741) that the place assumed any importance. It was Dupleix who enlarged and embellished the town and made it a great commercial centre. Chandernagore was captured by the English on the 24th March 1757 and was restored to the French on the 25th June 1765. Law de Lauriston went to Bengal in person to take over the principal settlement and its subordinate factories, which had been under English occupation for eight years. During this interval the position of Chandernagore had altered greatly. In the first place, the English had gained complete mastery over the province, reducing the French settlement to a mere commercial establishment with no political importance whatsoever; and even then its trading operations lay at the mercy of the English. In the second place, the face of the town had changed. The old *Fort d'Orléans* had been destroyed, most of the large buildings were in ruins, the streets were deserted, the population had dwindled from 60,000 in 1757 to 24,000 in 1765[2], trade and commerce had disappeared and the citizens had sunk into sloth and lethargy. Visiting the place in 1774, Comte de Modave wrote in his *Voyage du Bengale à Délhi*: "This town, formerly so flourishing, presents to the eye nothing but sad pictures of heaps of ruins and deserted streets, without buildings and without inhabitants. A sad and profound silence attests its present misery as much as it recalls the memory of its eclipsed splendour. In these ruins the French are, what they are everywhere ordinarily, proud of their past opulence and consoling themselves in their present misery by the hope of a happier future, and on such a slender foundation suffering cheerfully their present troubles in the ever-flattering hope of sharing, before long, the immense wealth of their rivals . . . . . . The settlement of Chandernagore is at present nothing but a shadow of what it was twenty-five years ago. The stipulations of our last treaty with England do not leave any reasonable hope of seeing the situation change".[1]

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[1] About the origin of Chandernagore, see S. P. Sen's article "*Farmans* and *Parawanas* for the establishment of the French in Bengal" (Indian Historical Records Commission Proceedings, 1946).

[2] Martineau—*Etat Politique de l'Inde en 1777 par Law de Lauriston,* p. 29.

By the terms of the Treaty of Paris, 1763, the French had regained their old trading rights and privileges in Bengal granted to them by the *Parawanas* of the local rulers. The trade of Bengal was the most important branch of the commercial operations of the French Company. The principal articles of trade were silk, cotton goods of many varieties, opium and saltpetre. As Law wrote in his *mémoire* of 1767,[2] "Everybody knows that Bengal is the principal place for the commerce of the Company; it is even the only place which can procure sufficient profit to cover our expenses in India. This commerce should go up to four ship-loads, each worth a million and a half livres at least. If the Company is ever obliged to give up Bengal, it must of necessity result in giving up everything, except perhaps its commerce in China". But in spite of the trading rights of the French, recognised by the treaty of 1763, the English tried to use their political power to gain a monopoly of Bengal's commerce and to oust other European competitors from the field; and from 1765 to 1778, when Chandernagore again fell into the hands of the English, the French made continuous protests without avail against the violation of their trading rights and privileges. As Law wrote in his *mémoire* quoted above, "From the manner in which things are developing, it is much to be feared that it (the extinction of French trade in Bengal) will come very soon as a result of the conduct of the English. To that are directly leading their continuous vexations to our manufactures, the excessive demands of merchandise made by their Company (going up to twenty million livres per year) and the extent of their private trade which goes at least to equal that of the Company. These indicate sufficiently that their object is to force us to withdraw . . . . To remedy this evil it is absolutely necessary for our Ministers to intervene in the matter. There must be the most peremptory orders to the Directors of the English Company, and given in a manner that neither they nor their employees in India could elude their execution".

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[1] A. N.—Ministière des Colonies: C-2, 256.

[2] P. A. ms. 100.

The settlement of Chandernagore was small in area. Its normal revenue, from all sources, amounted to fifty to sixty thousand livres a year. By the treaty of 1763 the French were not allowed to maintain any troops or to construct fortifications, and the settlement was exposed to attack from any quarter. It lay totally defenceless and could be compelled to surrender at the first summons. Moreover, the town being situated far inland, the inhabitants had no means of escape in the event of a sudden war. That was why Law advised the authorities of the Company in his *mémoire* of 1767 to spend as little as possible on building constructions at Chandernagore, and to pass orders for the quick disposal of all articles of export and import without keeping them in stock for long. At the time of taking possession of the settlement Law tried to make the English agree to some relaxation of the treaty provisions with regard to troops and fortifications, but all that he could achieve was the consent of the English to the keeping of 25 French soldiers and 300 sepoys, commanded by 3 European officers, with 20 pieces of cannon, only 6-pounders, in the interest of the security of French trade and commerce. He commented in his *mémoire*: "This small body of men together with about 100 Europeans in various situations that there are in the colony may be sufficient to shelter us from the attacks of brigands and marauders . . . . . in a time of trouble, but in case of a war what can be done? If we are not in a position to defend ourselves at Pondicherry, we are even in a much worse position in Bengal. The colony of Chandernagore, being situated so far inland, does not have even any door for escape. It follows necessarily that it must surrender to the enemy at the first summons".

II. *Law's plan of making Chandernagore the principal French settlement in India.*

When Law went to Bengal to take possession of Chandernagore, he had, perhaps, an idea of making it the chief French settlement in India. The conjecture is supported by the fact that he took with him to Chandernagore most of the members of the *Conseil Supérieur* at Pondicherry, leaving there only a small section which was to act on the orders and instructions from Chandernagore. It is also supported by the fact that Law knew Bengal much better than south India. He was the Chief of the French factory at Kasimbazar at the time of the English capture of Chandernagore in 1757, and during the course of his adventurous wandering after being forced to leave Kasimbazar he took service under Prince Ali Gauhar, later to become Emperor Shah Alam II, and acquired an intimate knowledge of men and politics in north India. When he returned to Bengal in 1765 he might have felt it necessary to keep a vigilant watch on north Indian politics, so as to take advantage of any opportunity to create a French sphere of influence in the disintegrating Mughal Empire. Pondicherry was far away and had no direct communication with north India. On the other hand, Chandernagore could serve as a convenient observation post for the French to watch developments in north India and to maintain secret diplomatic relations with the Princes there.

Anyway, if Law had any idea in his mind to make Chandernagore the principal French settlement in India, he soon abandoned it for two reasons. In the first place, he realised that the situation in Bengal and north India, as he knew it in 1757, had changed completely. The English had gained effective control of the country as far as Allahabad and had taken both the Mughal Emperor and the Nawab of Oudh under their protection. Thus there was little that French diplomacy could do in north India, specially when the Princes there proved so weak and undependable. On the other hand, under the existing circumstances the French would do better to turn to south India and enter into close relations with the Marathas and Haidar Ali, the only two Indian Powers whose alliance would be worth having. It was the opinion expressed by Law in several of his *mémoires*. In the second place, soon after Law had established the *Conseil Supérieur* at Chandernagore there started a conflict between that body and the remnant of the Council still functioning at Pondicherry. The latter, under the leadership of Boyelleau, the seniormost member of the Council, refused to recognise the authority of the Council at Chandernagore, and asserted that wherever the Governor might choose to reside for the time being, the *Conseil Supérieur*, under the terms of the Royal *Édit* of 1701, had its permanent seat at Pondicherry.[1] The conflict went to such a length that at the beginning of 1767 Law, together with the members of the Council established at Chandernagore, had to return to Pondicherry.[2]

III. *Administration of Renault de Saint-Germain.*

While leaving Chandernagore Law appointed Renault de Saint-Germain to take charge of the settlement. The latter had been occupying the same post in 1757 when Chandernagore was captured by the English. Renault de Saint-Germain remained in office only for a few months. He was an old man of seventy and lacked in firmness in dealing with the English on the question of the violation of French trading privileges recognised by the treaty of 1763. The English, in their bid to gain a monopoly of the Bengal trade, tried every means to evade the execution of the treaty provisions by putting new restrictions on French trade and commerce, either directly through their own agents or indirectly under the guise of the authority of the Nawab. The French records of the time contain a large number of letters exchanged between the Councils of Chandernagore and Calcutta on this subject[3] and a huge mass of complaints from French agents in the different subordinate factories against the activities of the English agents or of the agents of the Nawab acting under English instigation.[4]

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[1] P. A. mss. 2416, 2417.

[2] *Ibid*, ms. 109—Royal arrêt dated 10th February 1769 finally settling the conflict.

[3] *Ibid*, mss. 2420, to 2430.

[4] Gaudart—*Catalogue des manuscrits des Anciennes Archives de l'Inde Française*, Vol. III (records of the different factories in Bengal from 1765 to 1778).

The principal subjects of complaint on the French side were: ill-treatment of French agents which sometimes went to the length of using physical violence; the establishment of an English monopoly over the trade in saltpetre, the French being made to depend for their supplies on the English; the subjection of French shipping to vexatious inspection by the English and of French goods in transit from and to the subordinate factories to the exactions of internal customs by the Nawab's officers; the difficulties encountered by the French in getting regular supplies of silk at Kasimbazar, of opium in Bihar, and of fine cotton goods at Dacca, difficulties which they attributed, not without some reason, to the tyrannous control of the English over producers and manufacturers, compelling them to sell to the English Company first and threatening them otherwise with dire consequences.[1] The French made vehement protests against these restrictions on their trade and commerce, but their protests were of no avail in the face of the determined policy of the English to keep the lucrative trade of Bengal a close monopoly for their Company and private merchants. It is interesting to note from the records of the period that attempts were made to secure a close alliance between the French and the Dutch to protect their trading rights in Bengal against violation by the English, but they ultimately came to nothing.[2]

IV. *Administration of Chevalier: difficulties with the English.*

Evidently it required a more energetic and vigorous person than a septuagenarian like Renault de Saint-Germain to deal with the English, and so in July 1767 he was replaced by Jean-Baptiste Chevalier. Renault de Saint-Germain was allowed to retain the honours and prerogatives of his office in recognition of his past services. He died at Chandernagore in 1777. Under

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[1] About Anglo-French commercial disputes in Bengal from 1765 to 1778, a large mass of records will be found in C.R.O.—*French in India* Series: Vol. VI, pp. 3-53 (claims of the French and arguments opposing them), pp. 133-240 (Proceedings of the Supreme Government from 1772 to 1778 concerning disputes with the French); Vol. VII—Disputes with the French. 1773-1776; and Vol. IX, pp. 1-16.

[2] P. A. mss. 2420, 2431.

Jean-Baptiste Chevalier there was a brief revival of the importance and commercial prosperity of Chandernagore. Politically, Chevalier belonged to the school of Law de Lauriston, but while Law changed his attitude, Chevalier believed even after 1765 that it was still possible for France to create a sphere of influence in north India by taking advantage of the disintegration of the Mughal Empire. The success of Chevalier's administration at Chandernagore, at least in the earlier part, was due principally to the close personal relations he maintained with Verelst, the Governor, and other members of the Calcutta Council. It was because of this factor that recriminations about restraints on French trade in Bengal ceased for a time, and till the suspension of the privileges of the French Company at the end of 1769 Chandernagore became again a busy commercial centre.[1] Three or four ships came to Chandernagore annually with goods from Europe and returned with the merchandise of Bengal; and from Chandernagore ships were also sent to Mocha, the Persian Gulf, Pegu, Siam and Indo-China. With the revival of commercial prosperity there was a revival of the attractions of social life also at Chandernagore. The small house at Goretty, built by Dupleix as country residence for the Governor, was transformed by Chevalier into a great palace, the architectural beauty of which was an object of admiration to all and where came every week-end the Governor and members of the Calcutta Council to escape from the worries of official duties.

Taking advantage of the close personal relations with the Calcutta Government Chevalier thought of improving the defences of Chandernagore by slightly twisting the meaning of certain provisions in the Treaty of Paris, 1763. Under this treaty the French were forbidden to construct any fortifications or other defensive works at Chandernagore, but for hygienic reasons they were allowed to dig a narrow ditch round the town for the drainage of water in the rainy season. Chevalier had hoped that by giving this ditch sufficient width and depth he could turn it into something useful for the defence of the town against any surprise attack. In spirit it was without doubt a violation of the treaty, but through his personal friendship he gained the consent of Verelst, the English Governor, and it was through the latter's intervention that necessary permission was obtained from the Nawab. Accordingly, the work was undertaken at the beginning of 1768 and a Dutch engineer named Ogerdias was employed for the purpose. It is interesting to note that in his zeal for ensuring the defence of Chandernagore Chevalier did not inform the authorities of the Company in France about the construction of the canal until it was completed, and in a letter dated 12th December 1768 the Syndics and Directors of the Company expressed their disapproval of the conduct of Chevalier in spending so much money on the construction of the canal and particularly employing a Dutch engineer for the purpose.[1]

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[1] The letters of the Syndics and Directors of the French Company to the Council at Chandernagore during this period show the increased volume of French trade in Bengal (Gaudart—*Catalogue des Manuscrits*, Vol. III).

While the work was in progress the English Council in Calcutta raised no objection, but suddenly in May 1769, taking advantage of the absence of Verelst from Calcutta, accused Chevalier of breach of faith. It was alleged that while Verelst had given his consent only to the digging of a small ditch for the drainage of rain water, the French had constructed a deep and wide canal as a purely defensive work in violation of the treaty of 1763. The English Council sent Lt. Col. Campbell to inspect the work and the latter reported that the canal was 40 to 50 feet wide and 10 to 12 feet deep, with an earthwork constituting a rampart 40 to 67 feet wide and 8 feet high. As another proof of bad faith, the English Council alleged that Chevalier had actually spent three lakhs of rupees on the project while the original estimate he submitted to Verelst was one lakh only. The breach of faith was all the more reprehensible as the English, out of a feeling of mutual friendship, had consented of their own will to some relaxation of the treaty provisions regarding the maintenance of troops at Chandernagore. The Calcutta Council then sent a peremptory demand to Chandernagore to fill up the canal at once, and on the refusal of Chevalier the English sent troops and workers to demolish the rampart and fill up the canal. Chevalier and the Chandernagore Council protested vehemently against what they considered to be a high-handed action on the part of the English, but the susceptibilities of the latter had been roused so much that they paid no heed to the French protests.[1]

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[1] P. A. ms. 2472.

After this incident the relations between the English and the French deteriorated again, and the records of Chandernagore are full of complaints from the French agents in the subordinate factories against the high-handed actions of the employees of the English Company. The complaints mounted more and more till the capture of Chandernagore in 1778 on the outbreak of hostilities in Europe. Chevalier felt his position helpless against the growing tyranny of the English, and from 1769 he wrote pressing letters to the Ministry in Paris to intervene and bring pressure on the English Company through the Government of London to respect the treaty provisions relating to French trading rights and privileges in Bengal. But the effete Ministry during the later years of the reign of Louis XV did not take any action and did not even reply to Chevalier's letters. Finding no hope of getting any relief from France, Chevalier turned to the Indian Princes for succour. Through his own agents, like du Jarday and Montvert, or through French military adventurers in the service of Indian Princes, like Gentil, Madec and Visage, he carried on intrigues in all the north Indian *Darbars* with a view to induce them to attack Bengal and to harry and devastate the province so thoroughly that the English, deprived of their sources of revenue, could be compelled to come to terms.

These diplomatic projects of Chevalier, which will be dealt with more fully in the next chapter, were cut short by the outbreak of war between France and England and the sudden capture of Chandernagore on July 10, 1778. Lt. Col. Dow, who was sent from Calcutta to seize the French settlement, was greatly disappointed at not being able to seize Chevalier, who regarded by the English as their most dangerous enemy, who escaped from his house through the help of his wife.[1] Three weeks later, however, Chevalier was arrested at Cuttack and handed over by the Maratha Governor of the place, Raja Ram Pandit, to the English envoy, Alexander Elliot, who was then on his way to Nagpur on a special diplomatic mission. It was an irony of fate that Chevalier was betrayed by the agent of an Indian Prince on whom he had counted so much in his diplomatic intrigues. He was later released on parole and permitted to return to France.[2] Let us now turn to the subordinate French factories in Bengal.

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[1] P. A. mss. 2491, 2492, 2494, 2495.

V. *Subordinate Factories.*

Dependent on the chief settlement at Chandernagore were five factories, at Kasimbazar, Patna, Dacca, Jougdia and Balasore, and a few marts, known as *Aurangs,* where French agents procured supplies from weavers. Kasimbazar, situated very close to Murshidabad, the capital of Bengal, was the principal centre of silk trade. "It is from the neighbourhood of Kasimbazar, within a radius of twelve to fifteen leagues and even more, that people procure raw silk and an enormous quantity of silk goods of various kinds, the sale of which is in the hands of the English, the Dutch, the Armenians and the people of the country".[3] The French possessed a large village which yielded an annual revenue of 3500 livres. Before the last war they had a fine house with a large enclosure for the manufacture of raw silk, but it had been destroyed, and after 1765 they built only two godowns to stock the raw silk which they procured from other merchants. Law wrote, "This method appears less costly than manufacturing being done by us. The silk, it is true, is not as nicely wound or as equal, but this difference does not compensate for the expenses required by the re-establishment of the factory in the same condition in which it had been before".[1] According to his estimate in 1767, the French could procure from this region raw silk of various qualities worth 200,000 livres.

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[1] For the French version of the capture of Chandernagore and flight of Chevalier, see the report by Hocquart, commandant of the forces at Chandernagore—B. N. F. Fr. (N.A) 9366, pp. 291-300. For the English version, see Forrest—*Selections from Letters, Despatches etc., Foreign Department, Government of India,* III, pp. 639-653; also C.R.O.—*French in India* Series, Vol. IV, Extract of the General Letter from Bengal, 17th August 1778.

[2] About the arrest of Chevalier, see Elliot's letter to Hastings and the Calcutta Council in *Bengal Past and Present,* Vol. II, Part II, pp. 412-413; and Vol. IV for exchange of letters between Chevalier and the Calcutta Council. See also C.R.O.—*French in India* Series, Vol. IV, Parole signed by Chevalier, 1st October 1778.

[3] P. A. ms. 100 (Law's *mémoire* of 1767).

Patna was an even more important centre of trade. "It is from this province (Bihar) that saltpetre, opium and various kinds of white and printed cloth are procured. From this region are also procured borax which comes from Tibet and the adjoining areas and even gold, because I remember that the Dutch chiefs were very much interested in this branch of commerce"[2]. The French had no house of their own at Patna. They had one rented house just outside the town as residence for the Chief of their factory and another one to serve as warehouse for the goods coming from Europe, like cloth, lead, iron, copper etc. for which there was a good market at Patna, as also for the goods purchased in the province. Before the last war the French had a busy trade at Patna. Their purchases were worth a million livres and their sale of European goods amounted to two to three millions. But after 1765 their trade was seriously hampered by the English, who made use of their political power to establish a commercial monopoly. For the purchase of saltpetre the French were entirely dependent on the English, and their supplies of opium also were severely restricted by the pressure which the English put upon the producers. In fact, it was from the Patna factory that the largest number of complaints against English tyranny reached Chandernagore, and the dispute was intensified by the personal enmity between Carvalho, the Chief of the French factory, and Rumbold, his English counterpart.

At Dacca the French had a large commercial house, which had been saved from destruction by the generosity of the agent of the English factory there. Dacca was an important centre of trade, its speciality being fine cloth, known as muslin, as also embroidery. After 1765 the French trade there was valued at five to six hundred thousand livres per year. "Under more favourable circumstances trade could be extended to the value of 1,500,000 livres, but for that it is necessary to have money in hand always, so that the worker could be kept continually employed by us, without which he is at once engaged by others".[1] For a few years Dangereux, later to become Commandant at Chandernagore, was the Chief of the French factory at Dacca. He was replaced by an Indian agent, who in November 1773 was publicly beaten by the orders of the English agent, Barwell, as the result of a private quarrel. Failing to get any redress from the English Government in Calcutta the French closed their factory at Dacca.[2] Further down Dacca and situated close to the sea was another French factory at Jougdia (it had long since disappeared under water) not far from the English factory at Lakshmipur. The whole area was inhabited by weavers, "who manufacture very high quality cloth called *Hamans* and *Buffetas*. Every year we procure both for the Company as well as for private persons goods worth 7 to 8 hundred thousand livres . . . . . The English take three or four times more".[3]

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[1] P. A. ms. 100.

[2] *Ibid.*

The fifth factory was at Balasore, an equally important centre of cloth trade. "People manufacture there very beautiful and fine cloth named *Sanas* of Balasore, very suitable for making shirts. It is in my opinion the only Indian cloth which comes very close, from the point of view of glaze and cleanness of thread, to the beautiful Dutch linen. There is also a good quantity of iron in the country".[4] The French had a fine house at Balasore which had been destroyed during the war. After 1765 the Company ceased to have any trading operation there, although private French merchants carried on some business. The factory at Balasore was maintained primarily for the safe transport of letters from Bengal to Pondicherry by the land route.[5]

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[1] Law's *mémoire* of 1767—P. A. ms. 100.

[2] For the English version of the incident, see Forrest—*Selections from Letters, Despatches etc., Foreign Department, Government of India,* Vol. I pp. 109-110 (Sec. Sel. Com. Pro. 20th June 1774)

[3] Law's *mémoire* of 1767—P. A. ms. 100.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] *Ibid.*

MAHE

I. *Condition in 1765.*

The settlement of Mahé dated back to 1721 when the French occupied the territory from the ruler of Kadattanad, one of the numerous petty states then dotting the Malabar Coast. The origin of this settlement has been traced in detail by Martineau in his *Les Origines de Mahé de Malabar.* It is out of place here to sketch the history of Mahé during the troublesome days of Dupleix and Lally. Suffice it to note that it capitulated to the English on the 8th February 1761 and was not restored to the French till the 20th October 1765. In violation of the terms of capitulation the English had destroyed not only the forts but also most of the houses of the settlement, including those of private persons, and the act of pillage and destruction was completed by the ruler of Kadattanad to whom the English had handed over the settlement. In 1765 Law de Lauriston sent Captain Plusquellec to take possession of Mahé from the agents of the English Company at Tellicherry, but although Plusquellec arrived in March various difficulties were raised and negotiations dragged on for nearly eight months before the place was restored to the French.[1] Plusquellec protested to the Tellicherry Council against the destruction of private property in violation of the terms of capitulation and demanded three lakhs of rupees as indemnity. Needless to say that it was rejected by the English. Plusquellec further demanded that the English should notify the ruler of Kadattanad, to whom they had handed over the settlement, about the restitution and should procure a formal declaration from him recognising the rights of the French over the territories restored. While agreeing to the first proposal, the English rejected the second. Another point of difficulty was the demarcation of boundaries. Finally, after much wranglings, on the 20th October 1765 Plusquellec received possession "of the settlement of Mahé and its dependencies with the places where stood the fortifications, the *Fort Mahé*, the *Fort St. George*, the *Fort Dauphin*, the *Fort Condé* and the *Grand Calaye* with their dependencies as we possessed them at the beginning of the year 1749".[1]

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[1] The documents relating to the restitution of Mahé and the negotiations preceding it are preserved in the Pondicherry Archives, mss. 4444-4452

Mahé, like Karikal on the eastern coast, was situated on a river sufficiently deep for navigation by medium-sized vessels, but the sand-bar at the mouth rendered entry difficult. The principal article of commerce was pepper which grew in abundance all along the coast. The other important articles were cardamom and sandalwood, but the total value of the French trade was quite modest, not exceeding eight to nine hundred thousand livres a year in normal and peaceful times. There was indeed scope for greater trade but lack of funds constituted a serious difficulty. Law in his *mémoire* of 1767 considered the maintenance of the settlement at Mahé to be uneconomical, since in exchange for the small amount of commerce carried on there the French had to incur a heavy expenditure on the maintenance of a large garrison, rendered necessary by the uncertainties of the political situation in the neighbouring areas requiring constant vigil and military preparedness.[2] In order to understand this observation of Law it is necessary to look at the political condition of the Malabar Coast at the time.

About the middle of the 18th century the Malabar region was parcelled out into a number of small principalities ruled by Nayars, a class of feudal aristocracy. In the immediate neighbourhood of the French settlement was the principality of Kadattanad, stretching from the river Mahé in the north to the Kotta in the south. To the north of the river Mahé lay the two principalities of Kottayam and Kurangod, and further north lay the principality of Kolattanad or Chirakkal, under the rule of the Kolattiri family who had originally held sway over the entire region. To the south of Kadattanad were the principalities of Calicut and Cochin, equally feeble powers and weakened by many years of internecine strife, which in fact had given the European nations, the Portuguese, the Dutch, the English and the French their first foot-hold on the Malabar Coast. In the extreme south of the peninsula was the kingdom of Travancore, which was rising in importance and power since the middle of the 18th century. In 1766, taking advantage of the enfeebled state of the Malabar principalities, Haidar Ali led an invading army and quickly overran the whole country from Chirakkal to Calicut. But in spite of his ruthless policy Haidar failed to subdue the Nayars completely. Down to 1792, when the Malabar region passed under English control, there were chronic revolts against the rule of the Mysore Nawab, followed by brutal suppressions. It was these political turmoils, Haidar's invasion, rebellions of the Nayars and their suppression, as also the internal feuds among the Malabar chiefs themselves which Law had in mind in 1767.[1] We shall notice later how the French settlement of Mahé was dragged into these conflicts by the forward policy of two successive Governors, Duprat and Repentigny.

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[1] P. A. ms. 4451.

[2] *Ibid*. ms. 100.

In the midst of these political turmoils the French settlement lay in a poorly defended state. It was bordered on the south and east by a chain of hills, where the French had built three small forts, demolished by the English in 1761. To the north of Mahé, on the other side of the river, the French had built another fort on a hill overlooking the settlement. The territory belonged to the Nayar ruler of Kurangod. But this fort had also been equally destroyed, and in 1765 the settlement stood completely exposed on three sides. Law wrote in 1767, "We are not thinking at all of reconstructing these works on account of expense. It will soon be necessary, however, to decide either to quit Mahé or to make this expense". The principal part of the settlement was limited to a small area at the mouth of the river, surrounded by a wall with a few batteries for defence. The garrison consisted of 120 French soldiers and about 150 sepoys and Topasses. There were 30 pieces of cannon. About the defensive strength of Mahé Law remarked, "I even believe that in a general way they (the citizens of Mahé) are better provided than we here (at Pondicherry) in arms and munitions of all kinds; but that is not saying much. It does not prevent their feeling greatly troubled if a serious attack is made".[2]

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[1] For a more detailed account of conditions in Malabar at this time see *Madras District Gazetteers : Malabar and Anjengo Districts*, Vol. I, pp. 57-75; also N. K. Sinha—*Haidar Ali*, pp. 144-163.

[2] P. A. ms. 100.

Law considered that neither for trade nor for defence was Mahé worth retaining, and in his *mémoire* of 1767 he suggested two alternative places for transferring the settlement. One was Colachel in the kingdom of Travancore, close to Cape Comorin, and the other was Karwar, a little to the south of Goa, originallly belonging to one of the petty Princes on the coast and annexed by Haidar Ali to his own dominions. About the first Law wrote, "Collèche, two or three leagues from Cape Comorin, in the kingdom of Travancore, would have been more suitable to our Company. It would be possible to have a trade there worth three million livres every year in pepper, white cloth and other articles produced on the Malabar Coast. The king of Travancore had invited us and had even pressed us to establish a settlement in his territory from the time of Messieurs Dumas and Dupleix. I do not understand how this affair did not materialise. The English and the Dutch have established themselves in the kingdom of Travancore and they are doing well there".[1] About the second place, Karwar, Law stated that it offered great commercial as well as military advantages. "There is a little bay capable of accommodating thirteen or fourteen ships of the line and is equal to a port since vessels are in perfect safety there in all seasons. Just near the mouth there is a small island which every ship entering the bay must pass by. A small fort may be constructed there. There is also a fairly large river falling into the bay, in which light vessels can enter." Law did not think it impossible to secure the place from Haidar Ali "in spite of his inveterate hatred towards all Europeans; but for that it would be necessary to enter into an engagement with him, promising to help him on all occasions, and he is such a man that it would not be possible to elude the execution of the articles of a treaty with him." It is interesting to notice here that in 1770 Law pursued his project further and asked Picot, Governor of Mahé, to collect secretly all information about Karwar through the captain of a French ship, the *Iphigénie,* proceeding to Goa.[1] Picot did not favour the Karwar project because of its proximity to Goa and of the huge cost it would entail. On the other hand, he proposed the capture of the Maratha port of Viziadroog. The Karwar project, however, lingered in the minds of the French for some time more and we find it mentioned again in a report by Tronjoly to Bellecombe in 1778,[2] as also in the *mémoire* on Mahé by Martin in 1784.[3]

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[1] The Raja of Travancore had made the overture in 1741 in view of the threatened attack by the Dutch and their allies among the Malabar chiefs. But the victory of Colachel in August removed the danger and the plan of an alliance with the French fell through. See Panikkar—*The Dutch in Malabar*, p. 69.

II. *The aggressive policy of Duprat.*

Although the settlement at Mahé was not very important either from the commercial or from the military point of view, the forward policy adopted by its two successive Governors, Duprat and de Repentigny, brought it into great prominence during the period under review and almost led to a war between the French and Haidar Ali. It is necessary therefore to go into some details of the history of the settlement during this period, since it took Haidar Ali a long time to forget the incidents and become reconciled to the French. After the restoration of the settlement in 1765 Picot de la Motte was appointed Governor, and he remained in charge till 1773 and again from 1775 till the capitulation of the place in March 1779. There was nothing remarkable in the first part of his administration except the transfer of the settlement, like all the other French possessions in India, to the King consequent on the suppression of the Company in 1770. During his absence on leave Duprat assumed charge as Governor in November 1773. The new Governor had an undue notion about the power and prestige of his country. On his own responsibility, and even in direct violation of the instructions from Pondicherry, he undertook the task of extending French political influence on the Malabar Coast, unmindful of the resources at his command and of the difficulties to be encountered. As he expressed himself in a *mémoire,* "I have never looked at things except in a great way.

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[1] The instructions to the captain, his report on Karwar and Picot's letter to Law on the subject are preserved in the Pondicherry Archives, mss. 4454, 4455.

[2] P. A. ms. 251.

[3] *Ibid,* ms. 4536.

I have believed all through my life that a man can do what a man has done, and many have done great things".[1] The result of this kind of ambitious idea was that within a few months of his assumption of office he dragged the French into a serious conflict with Haidar Ali from which they could extricate themselves only by a great loss of prestige.

Duprat's ambition led him to imagine that he could turn the Zamorin of Calicut into a vassal Prince and utilise him for the extension of French political influence on the coast. It will be remembered that Haidar Ali had subjugated the territory of the Zamorin a few years back, but taking advantage of a temporary eclipse of Haidar's power the Zamorin returned and installed himself at Calicut in 1773. Haidar Ali sent a formidable force under Srinivasa Rao against the Zamorin, who in his distress sought for military assistance from the French at Mahé. Duprat, without waiting for instructions from Pondicherry and without calculating the risks involved, at once agreed to give military help to the Zamorin. At the beginning of 1774 he landed at Calicut with 100 men and three pieces of cannon, taking with him a frigate, the *Belle-Poule,* which was at Mahé at the time. The French flag was hoisted on the citadel and the palace, and on the 12th January 1774 a treaty was concluded with the Zamorin, by which the latter placed his country under the protection of the King of France and granted to the French a complete monopoly of trade and the right to build forts wherever they liked. On their side the French guaranteed to protect him against all enemies.

Duprat had embarked on a light-hearted adventure, but he had soon to give serious reflection to the consequences of his action when Srinivasa Rao, Haidar's general, arrived with a large force. It was only for the wise patience of Srinivasa Rao that a conflict was avoided between the French and their traditional ally, Haidar Ali, in which Duprat's handful of men could have offered little resistance. The Zamorin fled away from Calicut and the French also withdrew to Mahé in February 1774. The withdrawal was as humiliating as the adventure had been rash, and moreover it did not conciliate Haidar, since Duprat was more imprudent in his letters than in his actions. Before Haidar's forces had arrived, Duprat had written to him that he had come to take possession of Calicut with a battleship and that he was expecting two more with 4,000 men as reinforcement. In a proud tone he advised Haidar that his interests would be better served by an alliance with a powerful nation like the French. After the capture of Calicut by Srinivasa Rao, Duprat again wrote to Haidar telling him haughtily that he had withdrawn of his own will and not in fear of Haidar's army. He also reminded Haidar of his obligation to the French for their past help.

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[1] B.N.F.Fr. (N.A.), 9366, p. 400.

Duprat's action and more so his letters created in the mind of Haidar a deep suspicion and animosity against the French, whom he had all along regarded as his allies. He was in regular and friendly correspondence with Law de Lauriston, Governor of Pondicherry, and even at the time of the Calicut incident he had in his service a French corps which received regular reinforcements from Pondicherry. Naturally, when Law made professions of friendship towards him and tried to draw him into a close alliance with France against the English, Haidar doubted his sincerity as he could not believe that Duprat could have behaved in the manner he did without definite instructions from Pondicherry. The Calicut incident alienated Haidar from the French and rendered the diplomatic efforts of Law extremely difficult. It was not till four or five years later that Haidar was reconciled to his old allies.[1]

The discomfiture at Calicut and the reprimand he received from Law did not put a stop to the imprudent conduct of Duprat, and he soon got the French entangled in another conflict with Haidar Ali. At the time of the first occupation of Mahé the French had acquired through treaties concluded with the king of Kadattanad in 1723 and 1727 a monopoly of trade in pepper, cardamom and other spices over an area of three leagues along the coast, having the river of Mahé as the only outlet. But as the French owed money to the king of Kadattanad and had not sufficient funds to buy all the produce of the country, for many years they had relaxed their monopoly right and had allowed the king of Kadattanad to sell the surplus produce to the English at Tellicherry. In his anxiety to restore French prestige after the Calicut fiasco Duprat suddenly decided to enforce the treaty right of commercial monopoly and refused to allow any relaxation. It meant total ruin for the king of Kadattanad, since the French while enforcing their treaty right were not in a position to buy all the produce themselves. He protested, but only in vain, and Duprat declared that all cargoes of pepper sold in violation of the French monopoly right would be confiscated, holding out a threat that a large number of troops would shortly arrive to enforce the treaty right. In a letter to the chief of Haidar Ali's fleet dated 12th March 1774, Duprat declared that the French had a monopoly of trade in spices in the kingdom of Kadattanad and that if Haidar Ali wanted pepper he must buy it from the French at Mahé. Haidar Ali protested both in his name and in the name of his protégé, the king of Kadattanad, and called upon Duprat to re-establish freedom of trade. Without replying to him direct, Duprat wrote to Srinivasa Rao on the 23rd April that the King of France was a much greater sovereign than the Nawab of Mysore and that he would under no circumstances yield to the ruler of Kadattanad. The haughty tone of the letter was deliberate and meant to cover up the humiliation of the Calicut episode, and for the second time it brought the French on the verge of an armed conflict with Haidar Ali. It was only averted by the prompt action of Law who, as soon as he came to know of Duprat's indiscretion, recalled him and sent de Repentigny from Pondicherry to replace him. De Repentigny took over charge in September, and Duprat in indignation resigned his Colonel's rank in the French army in order to take service under Nizam Ali. By an irony of fate he was arrested by Haidar's men while passing through Mysore territory, and he would have been made to pay dear for his past imprudence but for the pressing intervention of Law which secured him his liberty.

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[1] B.N.F.Fr. (N.A.), 9366—Duprat's letter to Law de Lauriston, dated 29th January 1774, dealing with the treaty with the Zamorin of Calicut (pp. 190-191); Law's letter dated 21st February 1774, severely reprimanding Duprat for the Calicut fiasco (pp. 200-203); a detailed *mémoire* of Duprat, dated 14th February 1774, dealing with the negotiations with the Zamorin and reproducing all the letters exchanged between Duprat and the Zamorin, Haidar Ali, Russel who commanded the French corps under Haidar, and Srinivasa Rao (pp. 400-423). The last is also to be found in the Pondicherry Archives, ms. 4465.

III. *Repentigny and relations with the neighbouring Principalities.*

Repentigny's first task as Governor was to remove the cause of conflict with Haidar by reversing the policy of Duprat and restoring the commercial *status quo* which had existed before Duprat's time. But although Repentigny was anxious to maintain peaceful relations with his neighbours, particularly with Haidar Ali, he too soon got himself entangled in difficulties which might have produced serious consequences for the little French settlement. The young Prince of Chirakkal, heir to the throne, had been living at Tellicherry as a pensioner of the English since the conquest of the country by Haidar Ali in 1766. The example of Duprat in relation to the Zamorin of Calicut raised an ambitious hope in the mind of Bodman, the English Chief of Tellicherry, of restoring the Prince of Chirakkal to his territory and extending English influence on the Malabar Coast through him. He was encouraged in this idea by the estrangement between the French and Haidar Ali caused by the imprudent policy of Duprat. So he stood as a mediator to establish peace between the Prince of Chirakkal and Haidar and to re-instate the Prince in a part of his old territory as a vassal of Haidar. As a price of his mediation he got from the Prince the grant of a monopoly of all pepper in his future territory, to be sold to the English at half its normal value. The English sent an agent named Rodriguez Dominguez to Seringapatam in October 1774 with a lakh of rupees to win support for their scheme at the Court of Haidar. The mission succeeded, and the Prince of Chirakkal himself visited Seringapatam to pay homage to his suzerain. He came back in December 1774 and installed himself at Cannanore. Being an agent of the English and a vassal of Haidar, he was naturally hostile to the French at Mahé.

Once installed at Cannanore the Prince proceeded to increase his dominion by conquering the neighbouring territories. He overran Kottayam and threatened the Nayar ruler of Kurangod, whose territory lay to the north of the Mahé river. The Nayar of Kurangod, who had no force to oppose the invasion, fled away and took refuge at Mahé. Repentigny received him honourably and took him under French protection. The Prince of Chirakkal overran the territory of Kurangod and threatened to attack Mahé with 4,000 men. Repentigny had only 300 men, including sepoys, to defend the place. But his courage did not fail him. Advancing with his handful of men he inflicted three severe defeats on the Prince of Chirakkal in February and March 1775, whereupon the latter retired to his own territory. In order, however, to avoid a future attack with larger forces Repentigny hastened to enter into negotiations with the Prince of Chirakkal. The latter agreed to recognise the Nayar of Kurangod in return for a tribute of 80,000 rupees, and since the Kurangod ruler did not have any money Repentigny advanced him the amount, which was raised by loans from private persons at Mahé. Thus peace was concluded between the Prince of Chirakkal and the French, which upset the calculations of the English.[1]

IV. *Mahé from 1775 to 1779.*

Picot returned from France and resumed office as Governor in December 1775. For the next two years nothing remarkable happened, and the French were left at peace with their neighbours. There was no revival of commercial dispute with the ruler of Kadattanad; the Prince of Chirakkal completely forgot his recent war with the French, and the Nayar of Kurangod, who had been saved by the French, paid back his debt with total indifference. Even Haidar Ali seemed to have got over the affronts he had received from Duprat, although there always remained a lingering suspicion in his mind that the conduct of Duprat showed what he could expect from the French if they ever got a secure footing in India. Anyway, at least outwardly he remained on friendly terms with the French and even agreed to the cession of a few villages on the northern side of the Mahé river. Negotiations for this purpose which had been started by Picot were concluded by Bellecombe, Governor of Pondicherry, during his visit to Mahé at the beginning of 1778.

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[1] B.N.F.Fr. (N.A.) 9366—letter of Repentigny to the Minister, dated 31st May 1775 (pp. 430-31). This volume and also 9215 contain the correspondence of Repentigny and Picot with the Minister in Paris giving a full account of French relations with the principalities on the Malabar Coast.

During his short stay at Mahé Bellecombe also settled the question of repayment by the Nayar of Kurangod of the money advanced to him by the French while he had been attacked by the Prince of Chirakkal, 27,000 rupees for the expenses of the war and 80,000 for paying the tribute demanded. By this settlement, concluded on the 16th April 1778, the Nayar of Kurangod recognised the suzerain right of France and agreed to the annexation of a part of his territory to Mahé.[1]

With the outbreak of war between the English and the French in 1778 Mahé was again faced with a grave danger. It had neither money nor troops to organise an effective defence. After the fall of Pondicherry in October 1778, Picot wrote frantic letters to Haidar Ali, begging him to take the French settlement under his protection and to send money and troops for its defence.[2] For a time the fear of Haidar Ali deterred the English from attacking Mahé, the only surviving French settlement in India, but in March 1779 they sent a considerable force under Braithwaite and Mahé capitulated on the 19th on honourable terms. The garrison was accorded the honours of war and the English gave a solemn pledge not to destroy any public or private property, a pledge which they violated afterwards. Some time later when hostilities broke out between Haidar Ali and the English the former captured Mahé and laid siege to Tellicherry. But three years after, his forces were driven out of Mahé and the English completed their work of destruction begun in 1779.

CALICUT

Subordinate to the settlement at Mahé was a small factory at Calicut. It was of no political consequence and its trade was of negligible amount. As Law wrote in 1767, "We have there only a simple employee who has nothing to do for three-fourths of the year". It was only for a very short period, in 1774, that the Calicut factory came into some prominence because of the aggressive policy of Duprat, which almost led to a war with Haidar Ali. After that unhappy episode the factory relapsed into complete unimportance as before.

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[1] P. A. ms. 4496.

[2] *Ibid*, ms. 4511 (letter dated 3rd November 1778) and ms. 4516 (letter dated 21st January 1779).

SURAT

Besides Mahé and Calicut the French had also another factory on the western coast, namely at Surat. During the period under review the Surat factory had no commercial importance whatsoever. It had, however, great historical interest because it was at Surat, then the greatest trading centre in the East, that Caron established the first French factory in India in 1668.[1] It was from Surat that French agents went to the Coromandel Coast and established factories, first at Masulipatam and later at Pondicherry; and down to the close of the 17th century Surat retained its primacy as the principal French establishment in India. But with the development of Pondicherry under the able guidance of François Martin, Surat gradually declined in importance, till in 1701 the transfer of the *Conseil Souverain* from Surat to Pondicherry made the latter the principal French establishment in India. But even before that the Surat factory had lost its commercial importance and after the close of the 17th century its trading activities had totally stopped. It was due partly to the effects of the continuous Anglo-French wars in the closing years of the 17th century, but principally to the fact that the French Company had contracted huge debts at Surat which it was unable to repay. But the factory was still maintained, even after 1759, when Surat passed under English control.

During the period under review an attempt was sought to be made to revive the trading activities of the Surat factory, but the main difficulty was the opposition of the Nawab and the local merchants of Surat, which arose from the capture of an Indian vessel by the French Admiral Comte d'Estaing in 1759. As a reprisal the local authorities had ordered the capture of any French vessel that might happen to touch at Surat.

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[1] The *Farman* of Emperor Aurangzeb, dated 11th August 1666, permitting the French to establish a Factory at Surat, is preserved in the Pondicherry Archives, ms. 5057. For the early history of the Surat Factory see S. P. Sen—*The French in India : First Establishment and Struggle*.

Referring to this matter in his *mémoire* of 1767 Law wrote: "This capture was made in violation of a French passport that we had given; that provides a rightful cause to the proprietors. It is absolutely necessary therefore to pay some compensation if we want to re-open this branch of commerce . . . . ". There were great commercial possibilities at Surat, "the key to the entire commerce of India through the facility of marketing goods from all parts of Hindusthan." Law considered that Surat offered a very lucrative market "for our woollen cloth, a thousand objects of hardware, our Lyon cloth, copper, and lead," and cited the example of the English and the Dutch whose "annual sales are worth four to five million livres". The principal commodity of Surat was cotton "which is sold in all parts of India for the manufacture of cloth". Among other articles of export were printed cloth, useful for the trade of the African coast, wheat and other provisions.

The French had a modest house at Surat, outside the town proper, in a locality commonly known as the 'French garden' which had been acquired by them from the time of their first establishment in India. They did not enjoy any independent status and had not even the right to hoist their flag over their factory building. There were neither troops nor fortifications of any kind to defend the factory. As Law stated in his *mémoire* of 1767, "Surat is a place where we have no means to defend ourselves. If the English want to drive us out from there, a simple summons is sufficient". But he believed that there was a good reason for the English to leave the French at peace, unless they suspected some intrigues on their part with the neighbouring country Powers. "As this place has always been regarded as neutral and as it is even to the interest of the English that it should be neutral so as to be able to make use of the name of the local people in carrying on trade in a time of war without any risk, it is to be believed that they will leave us at peace as long as they do not suspect any intrigue in these parts from us." But while expecting the English to preserve the neutral character of the place, Law stated in his *mémoire* that it was a vulnerable point of attack for the French, "in case our naval forces permit it and there is nothing better to do". In fact, in most of the numerous French *mémoires* of the period Surat is invariably mentioned as a possible point of attack, next in importance only to Bombay.

Although completely defenceless and having no commercial activity whatsoever, the factory at Surat had considerable political importance as a convenient observation point for the French to watch the conflict between the English and the Marathas and to take advantage of any setback to the English power. Surat could serve as a base for carrying on secret negotiations with the Marathas and also for supplying information about the defences of Bombay. The existence of a factory at Surat also kept open the route to Delhi from the western coast, necessary for establishing political relations with the northern *Darbars.* It was because of the importance of Surat that the French Government maintained a Consul there, who was also the Chief of the Company's factory. During the period under review Anquetil de Briancourt functioned as Consul and Chief of the factory. But he does not seem to have taken much interest in political matters, as may be gathered from the paucity of reports sent by him on the Anglo-Maratha conflict or relating to the negotiations with the Maratha Court carried on by Saint-Lubin.[1] Anyway, he remained in complete ignorance of the outbreak of war between the English and the French in 1778, till he was arrested together with the other Frenchmen in the factory on the 3rd November.[2]

KARIKAL

The French possessions at Karikal in the kingdom of Tanjore were more extensive in area than anywhere else, including even Pondicherry. But throughout the conflicts of the 18th century Karikal remained outside the theatre of military and political activities. Nor did it have much importance from the point of view of the Company's trade and commerce. The fact was that the whole of the Kaveri delta, comprising the kingdom of Tanjore, was purely agricultural in economy, and

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[1] He did, however, send some reports to de Sartine, Minister of Marine and Colonies, relating to St. Lubin's negotiations at Poona. One such packet, including St. Lubin's letters, was intercepted by the English; C.R.O.—*French in India* Series, Vol. IV.

[2] P. A. ms. 5067—letter of Anquetil giving details about his arrest.

Karikal simply fulfilled the purpose for which it had been founded by Dumas, namely to serve as the granary of Pondicherry. In this fertile region the Danes first established a settlement at Tranquebar in 1616, followed by the Dutch at Negapatam in 1660. The French also, at the invitation of the Raja of Tanjore, established themselves perhaps at Kaveripatnam in 1688 but abandoned it twenty years later. It was in 1738-39 that taking advantage of the Raja's need for money and Chanda Sahib's successful war against Tanjore that the French came to acquire Karikal, the fort of Carclangery and a large number of villages in the neighbourhood, which were added from time to time as the Raja of Tanjore took successive loans from the French. They had to pay an annual tribute of 2,000 pagodas to the Raja, which was entirely remitted by a treaty concluded between him and Chanda Sahib in 1749.

After the Seven Years' War Karikal and its dependent villages were restored by the English on the 18th February 1765.[1] Law de Lauriston took possession of Karikal first and established his administration there temporarily, as Pondicherry was in complete ruins. One great point of controversy that arose at the time of the restitution of Karikal was about the annual tribute payable to the Raja of Tanjore, Law de Lauriston claiming that it had been remitted by the treaty of 1749 and the English refusing to recognise that treaty. Law left soon after to take possession of Pondicherry, making over charge to Fleurin. The settlement was successively administered by Le Comte, de Boistel, Hocquart, Dumirouet and Boistel again, till it was evacuated on the 9th August 1778 on the outbreak of war with the English.

Karikal's importance lay in the production of rice and it served as the granary of Pondicherry. But although the whole of Tanjore was extremely fertile, being intersected by many small rivers, in the French possessions agriculture suffered greatly and much of the lands remained uncultivated for lack of population. It was due principally, as Law pointed out in his *mémoire* of 1767, to the religious policy of the French, which acted as a deterrent to attracting cultivators from the neighbouring over-populated areas. Karikal, being very close to the sea and situated on a river in which even large vessels could enter throughout the year if the sand-bar at its mouth was cleared, offered great commercial advantages. "This settlement is necessary to the Company as much to help provisioning Pondicherry as for procuring cargoes for its ships. It is possible to draw from this place during a period of peace and by advancing money well in time diverse kinds of white and printed cloth, specially suitable for the commerce of the African coast, worth 7 to 8 thousand livres." The principal rivals of the French in this region were the Dutch at Negapatam; but although the English were not directly settled there, through their control over the Carnatic, of which Tanjore was a tributary state, they drew "much greater advantages than all the other nations."

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[1] The official documents relating to the restitution of Karikal are preserved in the Pondicherry Archives mss. 3285 to 3289.

Apart from commercial facilities, Karikal offered political advantages as well, in view of the not too friendly relations between the Raja of Tanjore and the English. As Law stated in his *mémoire* of 1767, "Karikal . . . . belonging to a Prince who perhaps cannot but be extremely jealous of the English power of which he finds himself a tributary vassal would make an establishment very suitable from the point of view of defence, specially if we had a fortified place there. It could serve as a general warehouse for all kinds of provisions and equipments necessary for a squadron." Other advantages were that, "the roadstead is sufficiently good, the bar there is less strong than at Pondicherry, and besides there is this river in which loaded vessels can enter throughout the year, which is a great advantage." It was not easy, however, to exploit the political advantages, since the English were as much masters of Tanjore as of the Carnatic. "We have a treaty with the king of Tanjore of nearly the same character as with Muhammad Ali Khan. There is no question of any alliance, offensive or defensive. This Prince would not have been sorry to make it . . . . but on the other hand, it being not possible to preserve the secret it may draw us into troubles with Muhammad Ali Khan or rather with the English under his name"

Nor was anything done to fortify Karikal effectively either by the Company or by the French Government which took over in 1770 in spite of the repeated advice of Law and Bellecombe in all their *mémoires*. The small fort which the French had on the river before the war had been completely destroyed, and in 1765 the place was totally exposed. Law commented later, "I do not see that the Company has any intention of constructing the smallest work there." The only defensive work built at Karikal after its restitution was a small redoubt "which we have constructed in haste and where the small number of European residents can take refuge. It can accommodate at the most 40 men." Not only were there no fortifications, the garrison kept there was so inadequate in number as could offer little resistance to any surprise attack. There were 3 officers, 30 European troops, 50 sepoys and five pieces of cannon, constituting all the artillery. "As regards the armoury, it is quite as brilliant as that of Pondicherry, since it contains nothing." The procrastination of the Company and of the French Government later resulted in the evacuation of the place on the 9th August 1778 immediately after the news of the outbreak of war.

YANAM

The settlement at Yanam dated from 1723, although it was abandoned for a few years before the time of Dupleix. It acquired considerable importance during the occupation of the Northern Sarkars by the French. After the treaty of 1763 the settlement was handed over by the English to Jean Jacques Panon, authorised by Law, on the 15th May 1765. The official document relating to the transfer mentioned that the French were given back possession of the village of Yanam, the village of Campoupalam and the lands dependent on them "with exemption from all export and import duties".[1] Soon after taking possession of the settlement Panon obtained a *Parawana* from the ruler of Rajamundry granting the French full liberty of trade at Yanam, and another one from Nizam Ali calling upon the Zamindars of the Sarkar of Mustaphanagar not to hinder the commerce of the French.[2] Yanam was situated in the province of Pettapur in the jurisdiction of the Raja of Rajamundry, a vassal of the Subadar of the Deccan. The French had a modest building there, situated about a league from the sea, on a river in which only small vessels could enter. The establishment was very small, including Panon, the Chief, and four or five other employees. There were no fortifications or troops.

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[1] P. A. ms. 5099.

[2] These and the earlier *Parawanas* are preserved in the Pondicherry Archives, mss. 5098, 5100.

The French trade at Yanam was not negligible. As Law stated in his *mémoire* of 1767, "It is from Yanaon that we get our best *Guinées*. It is possible to have a commerce here worth more than a million livres per year under circumstances more favourable than those in which we are placed now, but always by giving advances much earlier, what we have never been in a position to do. From this place are also procured teak-wood, oils, rice and other grains both for men as well as for animals." Apart from commerce Yanam had another importance, "the advantages which may be derived in a time of war from the alliances that we may conclude with several Rajas who sooner or later cannot fail to be dissatisfied with the English." Although the English gained an effective control over the Sarkars, the settlement at Yanam enabled the French to enter into secret relations with the local chiefs.

MASULIPATAM

The settlement at Masulipatam dated as early as 1669 and was the second earliest French establishment in India after Surat. We need not go into the details of the vicissitudes of fortune of the Masulipatam settlement. Suffice it to remember that it came into great prominence during the succession disputes in the Deccan, when Muzaffar Jang ceded to France the town of Masulipatam and its neighbouring villages, yielding a revenue of four and a half lakhs of rupees. This possession was lost to them after the recall of Bussy from the Deccan, and when the French returned to their settlement in 1765, Masulipatam had become an English town.[1]

The building of the French settlement at Masulipatam, together with a village named *Francepeth* about two miles to the north-west of the town, was handed over by the English to

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[1] All the *Farmans* and *Parawanas* relating to the French settlement at Masulipatem are preserved in the Pondicherry Archives, mss, 5158-5170.

Jean Jacques Panon on the 6th May 1765. The official document of restitution, preserved in the Pondicherry Archives, did not mention any right of exemption to the French from customs duties,[1] and although Panon claimed the same trading privileges for the French as they had in January 1749, the English refused to recognise the rights derived from earlier *Farmans* and *Parawanas.*[2] The settlement was administered in succession by Mangin, Louyer and Perichon till it again fell into the hands of the English in 1778.

The settlement house was a small building, situated on the river about half a league from the sea. There were no fortifications or troops, and the French, completely at the mercy of the English, had to restrict their commercial operations within limits allowed by them. The value of the French trade did not go beyond 100,000 livres per year. Law in his *mémoire* of 1767 estimated that "in a period of equilibrium between the European Powers it would be possible to procure from Masulipatam printed cloth of all kinds worth 7 to 8 hundred thousand livres every year." To the English Masulipatam was an important market for their goods from Europe, like cloth, lead, copper, iron, coral, etc., because of the communication they had with all the commercial centres in the interior of the Deccan, which the French did not have.

As at Yanam, the settlement at Masulipatam had a political apart from its commercial importance. It enabled the French to open secret communications with Nizam Ali, the Subadar of the Deccan, a "sworn enemy of the English . . . . it is only for that reason that it is convenient for us always to have somebody in these quarters in order to know everything that happens and to take advantage of the circumstances when it will be possible for us."[3]

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[1] P. A. ms. 5171.

[2] *Ibid,* mss. 5174 and 5175; also C.R.O.—*French in India* Series, Vol. VI. pp. 125-127.

[3] P. A. ms. 100.

CHAPTER V

DIPLOMATIC PROJECTS: CHEVALIER, MADEC, MODAVE AND GENTIL

The two preceding chapters have dealt with the history of the French settlements in India from 1765 to 1778. In the present and the two following ones we shall review the diplomatic projects formed by Frenchmen in India, including Governors and other officials as well as private adventurers in the service of the Indian Princes. There are in the Archives of Paris and Pondicherry hundreds of letters and *mémoires* from Frenchmen in India dealing with such projects of diplomatic alliances and military operations. Many of them were no doubt absolutely chimerical; nevertheless in a detailed history of the French in India during this period it is necessary to notice how they felt, what they tried to achieve and the means they sought. Considering the amount of interest felt by contemporary Frenchmen, it will not be out of place here to review the projects in some detail. For convenience of analysis, the various projects have been grouped into three sections: the first dealing with north India; the second dealing with the political *mémoires* of two successive Governors of Pondicherry, Law de Lauriston and Bellecombe; and the third dealing with south India. In the first section we shall review the projects of Chevalier, Governor of Chandernagore, and of three military adventurers in the service of the Indian Princes, Madec, Modave and Gentil.

CHEVALIER

One of the most important persons who submitted projects to the French Government for diplomatic alliances and military operations in India was Jean-Baptiste Chevalier, Governor of Chandernagore from 1767 to 1778. Trained in the school of Law de Lauriston and possessing an intimate knowledge of north Indian politics, Chevalier was a most colourful personality, with an optimism sometimes bordering on facile imaginative-ness and with a blind patriotism which on occasions brought on him ridicule even from his compatriots. He kept himself in constant touch with the Princes of north India and with the French military adventurers scattered all over the sub-continent, intrigued at every *Darbar,* and never doubted for a moment that it was possible for France even at that late hour to drive the English out of Bengal with the help of some of the Indian Princes. At an earlier period, when the English had not yet become firmly entrenched in Bengal, an energetic man like Chevalier might have achieved much in furthering French political influence in north India. But, unfortunately for him and for his country, he came ten years too late, when the English had already established their firm grip on Bengal, Bihar and Oudh, and France had fallen into a strange state of lethargy in colonial matters as a result of the frustration of her earlier efforts. Under the circumstances all that Chevalier could do was to carry on secret pourparlers with the north Indian Princes for an alliance with France and a combined attack on Bengal (just an alluring mirage), and to write frantic letters to the Government in Paris to send immediate and large-scale military assistance to these shadowy allies,—letters which down to the death of Louis XV did not receive even the scantiest attention in Paris and remained for the most part unanswered. As a consequence, Chevalier had to suffer the disappointment of ending his career as a mere intriguer, and although the English in Bengal considered him as their most dangerous enemy, to his own countrymen he remained a ridiculous figure who merely put forward fantastic projects.

In the preceding chapter we have seen how for some time after assuming charge of the French possessions in Bengal Chevalier tried to secure his national interests by a policy of friendly and amicable relations with the English. He was a very pleasing and genial host, and his palace at Goretty, near Chandernagore,[1] was the *rendez-vous* of most of the Calcutta celebrities of the time, including the Governor. For a time the policy of personal contact succeeded, but in 1769 there was a sudden setback and the English grew increasingly jealous of the economic recovery of the French factories in Bengal. The defensive canal round Chandernagore was forcibly filled up, and the English used their political power in the Province to obstruct French trade and commerce despite the provisions of the treaty of 1763. On several occasions they even went to the extreme and used physical violence against the employees of the French Company in the subordinate factories. They subjected all French ships moving up the Ganges to a humiliating search and they put every difficulty they could in the way of the French procuring supplies of cotton goods, opium and saltpetre, the principal articles of commerce in the Province. When repeated protests to Calcutta failed to secure respect for treaty provisions, Chevalier turned as a last resort to the north Indian Princes and tried to form an anti-English coalition strengthened by French troops.

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[1] Goretty was separated from Chandernagore by a small strip of territory not belonging to the French.

A connected account of Chevalier's diplomatic intrigues in the different north Indian *Darbars* and the policy he wanted France to pursue in order to drive the English out of Bengal may be gathered from the large mass of letters he wrote to the Ministry in Paris from 1769 to 1778.[1] We may discern three distinct periods in his ideas about French intervention in Indian politics: the first from 1769 to the installation of Shah Alam on the Imperial throne at Delhi in 1772; the second from 1772 to the broaching of the Tatta project in 1774; and the third from 1775 to 1778, when all diplomatic projects were cut short by the sudden outbreak of war and the prompt capture of Chandernagore by the English. In the first period Chevalier's policy was rather vague and not based on any definite line of action. He thought in a general way that the rapid expansion of English power had so much antagonised the north Indian Princes that it was quite an easy task to combine all of them in a joint attack on Bengal, provided they were assured of French military and naval assistance. Chevalier did not think yet of any concrete alliance with one or two important Powers but wanted to gain the co-operation of every possible ally,—the old Nawab family of Dacca, dispossessed of its rule over Bengal by Alivardi Khan; the existing Nawab of Murshidabad, a puppet of the English, but believed to be chafing under their control; Mir Kasim, the ex-Nawab of Bengal, who was making frantic efforts all over north India to gain military assistance for the re-conquest of the Province from the English; Shuja-ud-daulah, the Nawab of Oudh, who, although an ally of the English after the treaty of 1765, was smarting under the humiliation of defeat; the Maratha ruler of Berar and Cuttack, Janoji, desirous of extending his power over Bengal, and the three Maratha Chiefs, Sindhia, Holkar and Visaji Krishna, who had been sent to north India with a formidable army to restore the lost Maratha influence in that region and who found their path barred by the expansion of English power during the interval of the eclipse of Maratha authority after 1761. It is difficult to understand how Chevalier could have combined into even a loose coalition all these assorted elements, having conflicting interests and divided by sharp jealousies and suspicions. Anyway, he thought he could do it, provided only that France came out with an assurance of military and naval assistance to the Indian allies. One significant thing to notice is that during the first period he did not attach any political importance to the Mughal Emperor, Shah Alam, then living at Allahabad as a pensioner of the English, and did not want to include him in the ring of French allies.

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[1] B.N.F.Fr (N.A.) 9366.

In the second period, from 1772 to 1774, Chevalier's policy took a more definite and concrete shape. He dropped the idea of a number of heterogeneous allies and concentrated on a solid alliance with the Mughal Emperor, Shah Alam, now installed at Delhi. He advocated a policy of strengthening the hands of the Emperor and enabling him to assert his authority over his former vassals, who had assumed virtual independence, by lending him 5,000 French troops and organising a large sepoy force trained and armed in the European fashion. In that case the mere extension of the Emperor's authority would mean an extension of French political influence in north India, and when the opportune moment would come, there could be launched a joint attack on Bengal by land and naval forces. Chevalier made repeated representations to the French Government to send immediately 5,000 troops to the assistance of the Emperor. But although he meant only to strengthen the hands of the Emperor and not to launch an immediate attack on Bengal, the French Government felt, and with good reason, that the despatch of 5,000 troops to Delhi, even as volunteers joining the Imperial service, would be at once regarded by the English as a *casus belli.* So the French Government, unwilling to re-open hostilities on the Indian issue, turned a deaf ear to the urgent representations of Chevalier. The latter next tried to achieve his purpose by collecting round the Emperor all the French military adventurers scattered in different parts of India. But while he succeeded in attaching Madec to the service of the Emperor with his whole contingent, the French troops in the service of the Nawab of Oudh, of Basalat Jang, of Haidar Ali and of the numerous petty Princes all over the country refused to join the Imperial service merely for the uncertain prospect of extending French political influence in north India.

In the third period, from 1775 to 1778, Chevalier changed his plan to obviate the difficulty of English opposition. The new plan was based on a solid alliance with the Emperor and the cession of the province of Tatta or Sind to the French. The French were to keep a large garrison in Tatta and lend a small corps of troops to the Emperor. In case of necessity the whole body of French troops stationed in the newly acquired territory could move on to Delhi, effect a junction with the Imperial forces and swoop down on Bengal. The advantage of this plan over the previous one was that since Tatta was situated far away from the English possessions in India, the English were not likely to oppose the landing of French troops there with the same vehemence with which they would oppose the sending of 5,000 French troops direct to Delhi. The plan, in fact, was conceived not by Chevalier but by Madec whom he had persuaded a few years back to give up the service of the Jats and join the Emperor. But once Madec had forwarded the plan, Chevalier took it up with great enthusiasm and sent urgent representations to the French Government to accept the terms of alliance proposed through Madec by the Emperor himself. Fortunately for him, there was a fresh vigour in French administration from 1776, and for the first time the representations of Chevalier received due attention in Paris. But even then the French Government moved very slowly, much valuable time was lost in weighing the pros and cons of the project, and when at last in 1778 it sent Col. Montigny to India to give a final report on the Tatta project, two essential requirements for its successful execution had disappeared. Chandernagore had fallen into the hands of the English, and Chevalier had been arrested. Madec also had left the Imperial service in disappointment at the lack of encouragement from France, and with his departure from Delhi the French lost whatever political influence they had there. Let us now see in more detail the diplomatic projects of Chevalier in their three distinct phases from his own letters to the Ministry in Paris.

The first time that Chevalier drew the attention of the French Government to the political situation in north India and held out the prospect of an anti-English coalition was in a letter to the Minister of Marine and Colonies, Duc de Praslin, dated 10th January, 1769.[1] After complaining about the tyranny and constant vexation of the English in Bengal, Chevalier stated that the Nawab had been so completely under their control that all the letters he wrote to Murshidabad, the capital of Bengal, were sent to Calcutta where the replies were drafted. But at the same time Chevalier felt that at heart the Nawab was friendly towards the French and was willing to secure their alliance to rid himself of the yoke of the English. "If there remain any credit and authority with him he would soon give us the most convincing proofs of his goodwill. Even the Emperor . . . . does not speak of the French except with respect and admiration. He regards them as being destined to be his liberators from captivity, and all the Princes of Indoustan have the same sentiment. There is not one among them who is not ready to employ his forces and his money in our favour as soon as he finds us declare against the English". Chevalier then suggested that if France ever thought of intervention in India, the best means of combining the Indian Princes against the English was to send an expeditionary force to Bengal. "It is at Chatigan that our troops should land; there would be no reason to fear the opposition of the English, as they would be fully occupied in defending their frontiers against the Marathas and other Princes who could be induced by us to draw them there and keep them engaged".

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[1] B.N.F.Fr. (N.A.) 9366, pp. 1-9.

In a letter dated March 15, 1769[1] Chevalier gave a more detailed plan of operations in Bengal and showed the ease with which allies could be procured against the English. "The Muslim Government at Dacca is without force and is animated by hatred against the English. Therefore, far from offering any resistance it will surrender to us, specially if we take care to declare ourselves as liberators". Once the French had captured Dacca, Chevalier recommended that they should liberate the descendants of Sarfaraz Khan, the old Nawab of Bengal. The house of Sarfaraz Khan was very popular, and although the Princes of the family could not render any material help, Chevalier believed that "it would be sufficient to put forward their names, and we shall draw from this phantom all the advantages that we may be in need of. We shall summon the Nawab of Moxoudabad to place himself on our side . . . . . The beginning would be made by proclaiming at Dacca the eldest son of Safrescan, named Aga Baba . . . . . He would then be recognised in all the parts of the Province lying to the east of the Ganges . . . . . We would not leave at peace the part lying to the west unless the Nawab of Moxoudabad allies himself with us. From that moment the war would be finished quickly, and we shall suddenly find ourselves having reached our goal . . . . . The Nawab would help us not with forces, because he does not have any, but with money, credit and influence . . . . . We can count on Sojadaolah . . . . . who is only waiting for the favourable moment to declare himself on our side . . . . . We can equally count on the deposed Emperor; he does not have any troops, but his name would always be of great weight in facilitating all our intrigues and our policy". Chevalier then referred to the friendly overtures he had received from the Maratha ruler of Berar and Cuttack. "The Chief of the Marathas of Katek, sworn enemies of the English, had made overtures to me in writing and had proposed to leave us half of Bengal or an equivalent annual revenue if I would furnish him men and munitions for the conquest of Bengal. I have eluded the request by honest pretexts". The other Princes of the country had also made offers of alliance to Chevalier. "Only the pleasure of being able to satisfy their hatred against the English would draw these people to co-operation with us . . . . . There is not a soul in Bengal who would not make any contribution to facilitate, through our medium, the total expulsion of the English. They are only waiting for a favourable occasion. and it is in the French that they put all their confidence".

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[1] B.N.F.Fr. (N.A.) 9366, pp. 10-24.

Writing to the Controller-General of Finance on February 24, 1770,[1] Chevalier reiterated his view that the Princes of India were ready to combine together and join with the French in an attempt to drive the English out of Bengal. "Fear restrains them and none has the courage to be the first to raise the standard of Liberty. They content themselves with sighs for the French and desire to see them declare themselves openly in order to rally round their standard at once . . . . . If ever we carry the war to this country, we shall find here as many allies as there are Princes".

In a letter dated January 6, 1771,[2] addressed to the Minister of Marine, Chevalier again referred to the overtures he had received from the Marathas, Mir Kasim and the Emperor, and recommended the despatch of 4,000 troops from the Isle of France to be lent to these Powers. That would enable the French to fight as auxiliaries of the Indian Princes, although legally France and England remained at peace in Europe. The English could not object to this policy as they themselves had followed it in the past. "The Marathas know the superiority of Europeans to their own troops, and for that reason they desire to have a certain number of Europeans to oppose the English. As a result, Janoji, one of the principal Maratha Princes, with whom I have always been in contact and whose territories border on Bengal, has written to me to sound my intentions and to know if I would like to furnish him a corps of seven to eight hundred men with arms and artillery, while offering to advance me all the expenses. This request has again been supported by three other Chiefs who command all the forces camped near Delhi, numbering 200,000 cavalry, and I have been assured that the Emperor himself would write to me to persuade me to agree to the request and to join our forces to his by a treaty. He is not unaware of the large number of troops that we have in the Isle of France and seems to have based his expectations on that". To these overtures Chevalier had replied in an evasive manner, but in order to maintain close relations with the Powers for use in future he thought it necessary to send French agents to the various *Darbars*. Visage, a surgeon by profession and later to enter the service of Shuja-ud-daulah, was sent to Janoji and was further entrusted with letters for the other principal Maratha Chiefs as also for Mir Kasim. Another person, du Jarday, formerly an employee of the French East India Company at Pondicherry, was sent to Delhi in the guise of a Muslim. He was to meet the Emperor and the three Maratha Chiefs there and was to send information regarding their projects. Chevalier next referred to the ease with which French troops could be maintained in India at no cost to France. "It is easy to maintain, without having to spend a *sou*, a thousand men under Janogy, an equal number under Kashim Ali, and about three times the number under the Emperor . . . . . By this means we would acquire the alliance of all the Princes, their friendship, their protection, and in addition a part of their riches. Excellent officers could be employed under the different Princes for organising sepoys and training them in our exercises and manœuvres".

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[1] B.N.F.Fr. (N.A.) 9366, pp. 25-29.

[2] *Ibid*, pp. 77-104.

In the second period, after the restoration of Shah Alam at Delhi, Chevalier's policy took a more definite and concrete shape. An alliance with the Emperor and strengthening his authority by placing a body of French troops at his service became the corner-stone of his diplomacy. An alliance with the Emperor was all the more useful to France since he was supported by the Marathas, the strongest Power in India and the only one likely to have the courage to attack the English position in Bengal. So from the beginning of 1772 Chevalier made pressing representations to the Government in Paris to conclude an alliance with the Emperor and send 5,000 troops to his assistance. At the same time he also made frantic efforts to rally round the Emperor all the French military adventurers scattered in different parts of India. While he failed in the case of those who were in the service of Shuja-ud-daulah and Basalat Jang, he succeeded in persuading Madec to give up the service of the Jat Raja and join the Emperor even at a great personal loss. It is interesting to notice that while in his letters to the Minister Chevalier repeatedly stated that it was the Emperor who was asking for French military assistance, in his letters to Madec persuading him to join the Imperial service he wrote that his main purpose was that once in the confidence of the Emperor Madec could induce him to take in his service a body of French troops.

In his first letter dated January 20, 1772, Chevalier urged Madec to join the service of the Emperor and to induce him to accept two to three thousand French troops from the army stationed in the Isle of France.[1] It was followed by a second one, dated July 24, 1772, in which Chevalier wrote that the Indian Princes were getting impatient of English tyranny and could be persuaded to welcome French troops as liberators. The person most wronged by the English was the Emperor, and Madec was to turn to him first and inform him that Chevalier could send to his assistance any number of French troops that he might want. Du Jarday, whom Chevalier had sent to the Emperor, was to give Madec full details of his diplomatic project.[2] In the third letter, dated August 16, 1772, Chevalier again urged Madec to enter the Imperial service, get into the confidence of the Emperor and press upon him the utility of a corps of French troops.[3] Then came the most pressing call from Chevalier which finally decided Madec. "Leave the service of the Raja as quickly as you can and join the Emperor. Once near him, you will show him the necessity of augmenting your corps and how much it will be for his safety, and then it will be for him to supply the necessary funds."[4]

The first time that Chevalier definitely proposed the despatch of French troops to the assistance of the Emperor was in a letter to the Minister dated August 30, 1772.[5] After stating the change in the Indian political situation brought about by the restoration of the Emperor at Delhi with the help of the

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[1] Barbé—*Le Nabob René Madec,* p. 61.

[2] *Ibid,* pp. 73-75.

[3] *Ibid,* pp. 78-80.

[4] *Ibid,* pp. 82-83.

[5] B.N.F.Fr. (N.A.) 9366, p. 133.

Marathas, Chevalier wrote that the Emperor had asked him if he could procure a body of 5,000 French troops for his service. But, as we have seen already, the initiative really came from Chevalier himself. Anyway, the attitude of the Minister was extremely discouraging. He was entirely opposed to giving any provocation to the English by forming alliances with the country Powers. In a letter dated September 29, 1772 Chevalier expressed great surprise and resentment at this attitude and recommended that the best course for the French was to quit India completely rather than show their humiliation and impotence to the country Powers.[1]

In spite of the rebuff, however, Chevalier did not remain inactive but pursued his old policy of forming diplomatic alliances with some of the country Powers in the hope of ultimately being able to bring the French Government to his point of view. Through the efforts of his agent at Delhi, du Jarday, terms of alliance with the Maratha Chief Mahadaji Sindhia were drawn up, which were communicated by Chevalier to the Minister in his letter dated February 10, 1773.[2] The terms in substance were: (1) in case of a war between the French and the English Sindhia was to declare himself an ally of France; (2) if there arrived a French expeditionary force in India Sindhia would join it with his forces; (3) the Marathas would conduct the French army if it landed on the Orissa or Gujarat Coast, and would supply free of cost provisions and animals for transport; (4) if the English were driven out of Bengal the Peshwa was to get back all that legitimately belonged to him; (5) the two parties would remain permanently allied; (6) the treaty must be ratified by their respective sovereigns.

On February 28, 1773 Chevalier wrote a long letter to the Minister of Marine and Colonies, de Boynes, giving details of the political situation at Delhi and the results of his negotiations, and reiterated once more his demand for a body of French troops for the assistance of the Emperor.[3] After narrating the course of events which led to a dispute between the Emperor and his former allies, the Marathas, the sanguinary battle in the capital, and the severe treaty imposed by the Marathas, Chevalier wrote that even when the Emperor was forsaken by all, it was necessary for France to come to his help and strengthen his authority by lending him a body of troops. He was doing all that he could to persuade French military adventurers, scattered in different parts of the country, to join the Imperial service. "I have induced the French party under Basalat Jang, commanded by Zéphir and since his death by Gardé, to offer its services to the Emperor. For this purpose I have sent sieur Mottereau to Delhi, where he is to negotiate this matter. It may be regarded as concluded if the Emperor agrees to pay the expenses both for the maintenance as well as for the transport of troops. They consist of 600 Europeans, well-armed and disciplined, 900 Topasses (of mixed European and Indian descent), 4,000 sepoys trained and armed in the European fashion and a train of 12 pieces of artillery". It may be noticed here that this plan of Chevalier never materialised, and although the exact reason is not known it may be presumed that the fundamental difficulty lay in the financial distress of the Emperor. Chevalier went on narrating how by his persuasions Madec with his corps of 200 European and 3,000 sepoys had abandoned the service of the Jat Raja and had joined the Emperor, how he acquired great influence and credit at the Imperial Court, how he fought bravely against the Marathas in defence of the Emperor, and how after the battle he retained the confidence of the Emperor and at the same time earned the respect of the Marathas. Chevalier felt confident that if given marks of official recognition by the French Government, a patriotic and enterprising person like Madec could be of immense use in furthering national interests.

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[1] B.N.F.Fr. (N.A.) 9366, p. 136.

[2] *Ibid*, p. 137.

[3] *Ibid*, pp. 138-147.

In the next letter, dated April 15, 1773,[1] Chevalier informed the Minister that he had received an envoy from the Emperor and the Marathas with solicitations to join the common cause. The envoy had also brought the treaty proposed by the Marathas, the terms of which appeared to Chevalier quite advantageous from the French point of view. The French would not be put to any expense for the 5,000 troops to be supplied, and in addition they would be granted complete freedom of trade throughout Hindusthan. If they joined the coalition as auxiliaries they might be given possession of Bengal in the same way as the English held it, provided they paid thirty lakhs of rupees annually to the Emperor and twenty-five lakhs to the Marathas. In short, Chevalier considered the treaty to be a satisfactory basis for effecting a political revolution in north India, absolutely necessary in the interest of French trade and commerce. But the crux of the difficulty lay, as Chevalier should have understood, in the financial distress of the Emperor; and in a letter dated October 3, 1773[1] Chevalier complained that while the Emperor repeatedly asked for French troops he made no move at all to advance money for the purpose. The political calculations of Chevalier were totally upset by the sudden outbreak of dissension at Poona, and in a letter dated February 2, 1774[2] he informed the Minister that the Maratha Chiefs had hurriedly returned to their capital, leaving the Emperor alone. The Emperor's envoy had gone back to Delhi, and no further move could be taken with respect to his proposal for French troops unless he advanced money to cover the expenses. Another loss to the French was the death of Janoji, but Chevalier maintained close relations with his successor Mudaji.

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[1] B.N.F.Fr. (N.A.) 9366, pp. 148-157.

The correspondence of Chevalier became less frequent during 1774-75, no doubt because of the repeated disappointments he received from the Government in Paris since the first representation he made in 1769 for the despatch of a body of French troops to the assistance of the Indian Princes. In a letter dated January 23, 1775 Chevalier expressed his regret that the inactivity of the French had allowed the English to gain increasing predominance in the different *Darbars,* and if things continued like that, in a few years' time the French would be turned out completely and England would rule over India like a despot. He then proposed that if nothing was going to be done to stop the progress of English power in India, it was better for the French to leave India at once without exposing themselves to further humiliation.[3]

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[1] B.N.F.Fr. (N.A.) 9366 pp. 158-166.

[2] *Ibid,* pp. 192-196.

[3] *Ibid,* pp. 233-236.

It was towards the end of 1775 that Madec put forward his project for an alliance with the Mughal Emperor on the basis of the cession of the province of Tatta or Sind to France. For the next two and a half years the Tatta project held the attention of the French Government and of other persons who were interested in the matter of restoring French influence in India. There were two reasons for the Tatta project to have received more consideration from the Government than the earlier plan of Chevalier. The first was the change of administration, lethargic de Boynes being succeeded by the more enterprising de Sartine at the Ministry of Marine and Colonies. The second was that the Tatta project was an improvement on Chevalier's earlier plan and was less likely to rouse the susceptibilities of the English since Tatta lay far off from the existing English possessions in India. It is not a little surprising that while making repeated representations to Paris for an alliance with the Emperor and for the despatch of a body of French troops to his assistance, an astute person like Chevalier did not think of a means by which the opposition of the English could be eliminated, and conceded to Madec the credit of a project which in essence was the same as his with one important improvement, namely a territorial cession to France in an area lying far off from the English possessions. Anyway, although Madec was the originator of the project, it was at once accepted by Chevalier with enthusiasm, and in fact without Chevalier's support Madec's plan would not have received any consideration in France.

The full details of the Tatta project will be found in the next section relating to Madec's diplomacy. Here we need only indicate the broad outline of the plan and the efforts of Chevalier to put it into execution. The basis of the project was the cession of the town and province of Tatta to France by the Mughal Emperor in return for a solid alliance. That would give the French an opportunity to maintain a large body of troops in the ceded territory and a small corps in the direct service of the Emperor to help him in establishing his authority over his recalcitrant vassals. When the opportune moment arrived, the entire body of French troops maintained in Tatta could be moved on to Delhi, where they would be joined by the Imperial troops, and the combined forces could make a sudden attack on Bengal. In order to keep the matter a close secret the Emperor asked Madec to write to the French Government direct without going through the official channel of Chevalier, but Madec realised that he did not have sufficient standing for carrying on negotiations independently. So from the beginning he approached Chevalier for his active support, and in fact it was the representations of Chevalier which were responsible for the serious consideration given to the Tatta project in France. But things moved very slowly, and for the whole of 1776 and the early part of 1777 Chevalier did not receive any response from France. In a letter dated August 11, 1776 he urged the immediate necessity of accepting the Tatta proposal and warned the Government that the Emperor was losing courage and patience.[1] As late as February 1777 Chevalier remained without any hope. In a letter to Duc de Choiseul, dated February 8, 1777 he wrote, "All that I write remain unanswered, which proves a very mortifying indifference towards me and a lack of confidence in my talents and capacity ....I wish that the arrival of Monsieur Law in France will make known how much important it is to take into the most serious consideration the question of India."[2]

It was only about the middle of 1777 that Chevalier received the first favourable response from Paris, and in a letter to the Minister, dated August 31, he wrote that as soon as he received definite orders he would send des Blottières on a reconnoitring voyage to Tatta.[3] But there was again a prolonged silence. Even as late as February 18, 1778 we find Chevalier regretting in a letter to the Minister the dilatory policy of the Government and warning him that unless steps were taken promptly the French would be totally expelled from the country.[4] The thing was that after long deliberations the French Government decided at the end of 1777 to send out Col. Montigny to see things for himself and report on the feasibility of the Tatta project. In the meantime one essential factor for the successful execution of the project was removed by the departure of Madec from north India in 1777, in sore disappointment at the lack of response to his proposal. Madec bitterly complained to Chevalier for having received no letter from him since he first put forward his proposal in 1775. But, as will be evident from the correspondence of Chevalier given in the next section, it was not because of Chevalier's negligence but because of circumstances over which he had no control that Madec did not receive any letter from him. In fact, Chevalier sent a personal agent named Montvert with letters for the Emperor and his Minister, and Montvert was instructed to work in accord with Madec and carry through negotiations with the Emperor. Montvert failed in his duty; he did not proceed to his destination and did not even inform Madec about the object of his mission. That was why Madec was kept completely in the dark till April 1777, when he received the first communication from Chevalier, informing him of the favourable attitude of the French Government towards his Tatta project.[1] But it was then too late, Madec could not be shaken from his decision to quit north India; the Emperor had also changed his mind and negotiations had to be started afresh.

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[1] B.N.F.Fr. (N.A.) 9366, pp. 275-279.

[2] Gentil—*Mémoires sur l' Indoustan ou Empire Mogol,* pp. 423-428.

[3] A.N.—Colonies: Série Noire, Vol. 34; see also Chevalier's letter to the Minister, dated 15th December 1777, in connection with the mission of Desblottières—B.N.F.Fr. (N.A.) 9366, pp. 289-290.

[4] B.N.F.Fr. (N.A.) 9366, pp. 289-290.

The prospect of a successful execution of the Tatta project was finally removed by the outbreak of war between France and England and the sudden capture of Chandernagore on July 10, 1778. Lt. Col. Dow, who was sent from Calcutta to seize the French settlement, was particularly instructed to arrest Chevalier, regarded by the English as their most dangerous enemy. But Chevalier escaped from his house through the help of his wife. Three weeks later, however, he was arrested at Cuttack by the Maratha Governor of the place and handed over to the English. It was an irony of fate that Chevalier was betrayed by the agent of an Indian Prince on whom he had counted so much in his diplomatic intrigues. He was later released on parole and permitted to return to Europe. Back in France at the end of 1779, Chevalier tried once more to persuade the Government to accept his views about the plan of military operations in India, but by that time he had fallen into political disgrace and lost all credit in Government circles.

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[1] Barbé—*Le Nabob René Madec*, p. 211.

All his plans regarding diplomatic alliances and military operations in India were treated with contempt, and in spite of his long experience in India and his intimate knowledge of the Indian political situation he was not even consulted when the French Government decided to send out an expeditionary force under Bussy in 1781.[1] One thing that may be said in conclusion about Chevalier is that whatever discredit he might have earned by his unrealistic approach to the Indian political situation, there cannot be any doubt about the sincerity of his patriotic fervour; and therefore the political disgrace into which he fell after his return to France had everything tragic about it.

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Chevalier's project centred on an alliance with the Mughal Emperor and the despatch of a large body of French troops to Delhi with the immediate object of re-establishing his authority over his vassals and the ultimate one of making a joint attack on Bengal. The main difficulty of this project was that the despatch of a large body of French troops to Delhi was sure to be regarded by the English as a direct threat to their own position in Bengal. Objection on this ground was raised by both Law at Pondicherry and the Minister of Marine and Colonies, de Boynes, in Paris. A variation of Chevalier's project was put forward by Madec, one of the most famous French adventurers in the service of the Indian Princes. To be sure, Madec got his inspiration from Chevalier, but for whose patriotic exhortations he would probably have ended his career as a mere military adventurer and would not have taken any part in political negotiations. To be sure again, Madec's project was essentially the same as Chevalier's, namely strengthening the authority of the Mughal Emperor with a large body of French troops, with the ultimate object of attacking the English in Bengal. The difference lay in that Madec tried to obviate the opposition of the English by securing from the Emperor a grant of the province of Tatta or Sind, situated far away from the English possessions in India, where the main body of the French troops would be kept while a very small force would be maintained at Delhi in the direct service of the Emperor. English suspicion would be lulled into sleep, and when the favourable moment for action would arrive, the entire French forces in the province of Tatta could be taken to Delhi and employed in a large-scale invasion of Bengal from the north, while at the same time a French fleet moving up the Ganges would lay siege to Calcutta. Thus Madec's plan was calculated to take away the opposition of Law and de Boynes to Chevalier's project.

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[1] B.N/F.Fr. (N.A.) 9366, pp. 305-309.

René Madec, like most of the French adventurers of the period, first came to India during the time of Dupleix and fought in the Carnatic wars. He was taken prisoner after the fall of Pondicherry in 1761, and gained his release by taking service under the English. He fought on the side of the English against Mir Kasim at Rajmahal, but at heart he wanted an opportunity to escape and take to the career of a military adventurer. He got his opportunity during the first mutiny in the English sepoy force on the eve of the battle of Buxar, escaped with some of his compatriots and took service under Shuja-ud-daulah, the Nawab of Oudh. He was wounded at the battle of Buxar and was later dismissed by Shuja-ud-daulah under English pressure. Madec then found employment first under Ghaziuddin Khan, son of the famous *Wazir*, and then under the Rohillas, and finally joined the Jats in 1767.[1] It was while in the service of the Jats that Madec came under the influence of Chevalier, who was thinking of strengthening the authority of the Mughal Emperor by the adhesion of the numerous French soldiers scattered in different parts of India.

Chevalier's first letter to Madec was dated 2nd April 1771. Madec was exhorted to work as an agent of France and not merely as the chief of a private army, and he was assured of official recognition and reward for any service that he might render to the nation. There was a long gap, and the second letter that Madec received was dated 20th January 1772.[2] For the first time Chevalier asked him to join the service of the

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[1] For an account of the early career of Madec, see Barbé—*Le Nubob René Madec,* pp. 1-44.

[2] *Ibid,* p. 61.

Mughal Emperor and to be ready to invade Bengal with the Imperial and Maratha forces. The third letter was dated 24th July 1772, in which Chevalier made a pressing request to Madec to join the Imperial service immediately without caring for any personal sacrifice. He was also asked to confer with du Jarday, whom Chevalier was sending to the Delhi Court for negotiations.[1]

Madec was placed in a difficult position by the march of the Imperial army against the Jats. If he fought against the Emperor he would upset the diplomatic project of Chevalier; if on the other hand, he deserted the Jats and went over to the Emperor he would lose his arrears of salary amounting to two lakhs of rupees. But while he was secretly negotiating with the Emperor, he received another pressing letter from Chevalier: "Leave the service of the (Jat) Raja as early as you can and attach yourself to the Emperor .... The thing is how to raise the Nation from its past misfortunes and to revive its glory and splendour. Begin then preparations for it, and I count very much on you for succeeding in an object as praisworthy and as glorious".[2] Madec gave his reactions in his *Mémoires* in the following words: "I was too flattered that the Government believed me to be capable of deciding the fate of my Nation in India not to show him (Chevalier) on my side my eagerness to support his views with all my efforts ...... At last the repeated solicitations of M. Chevalier and my love for my country made me soon forget the debt due to me by the Jats." He at once concluded negotiations with the Emperor and passed into his service on a salary of Rs. 40,000 per month with a title of nobility.[3]

Thus out of patriotic motives Madec left the Jats, sacrificing the arrears of salary due to him amounting to two lakhs of rupees, and in November 1772 entered the Imperial service. He remained there only for three months and suffered the loss of his entire camp during the Maratha attack on Delhi. But his personal reputation was enhanced by his stubborn defence and he was offered a very lucrative employment under Sindhia, the chief of the Maratha forces in north India. Although the offer was accepted, the repeated personal misfortunes and the lack of any response from the French Government to Chevalier's diplomatic project, which had inspired him to offer his services to the Mughal Emperor, so discouraged Madec that at the end of February 1773 he decided to quit India and return to France. He, however, tried to safeguard the interest of the nation and the success of Chevalier's project by leaving his corps intact in Sindhia's service under the command of Chevalier's agent, du Jarday.[1]

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[1] Barbé—*Le Nabob René Madec,* pp. 73-75.

[2] *Ibid,* pp. 82-83.

[3] *Ibid,* pp. 83-84.

Madec finally left the camp of Sindhia in June 1773, and passing through the Jat country he reached the territory of the Raja of Gohad who received him warmly. But from there he was not allowed to proceed further by the strong remonstrances of Chevalier. His presence at Delhi and his active collaboration formed the very foundation of the plan proposed by Chevalier to the Government in Paris, and hence Chevalier frantically tried to prevent Madec's departure. Ultimately Madec had to return to Sindhia's camp, but he did not remain there long. As Sindhia moved towards Deccan on the outbreak of dissension at Poona, Madec was unwilling to go so far away from Delhi, the centre of Chevalier's diplomacy. Through the good offices of Gentil, a French military adventurer like him, he entered the service of Shuja-ud-daulah but had to leave immediately after under English pressure. However, Shuja-ud-daulah secured for Madec a profitable employment under Najaf Khan, the General of the Mughal Empire. In accordance with the prevailing system Madec was assigned a *Jagir* or landed estate, which he was to administer and from the revenues of which he was to maintain his contingent. His headquarters was at Bari, not far from Agra. Thanks to his good administration and strict care in financial matters he was able to secure a steadily increasing revenue, with which he could gradually enlarge his contingent and turn it into one of the best fighting units in India at the time.[2]

Writing to the Minister in January 1775, Chevalier referred to Madec thus: "We have at Delhi a Frenchman, Madec, who deserves the attention of our Government. He enjoys the greatest influence over the Emperor in whose service he is, at the head of an army of nearly 10,000 men, both Infantry and Cavalry."[1] In fact, Chevalier, who had set his mind on the project of an alliance between France and the Mughal Emperor, had reason to feel happy at the increasing strength of Madec's contingent and at his steadily rising influence at the Delhi Court, since Madec was intended to be the principal instrument for the execution of his plan. But from France he received no encouraging response whatsoever, and in 1775 he gave up all interest in his project in despair, until towards the very end of the year Madec's arrangement with the Emperor about the cession of Tatta revived his hopes and renewed his old enthusiasm. On the other hand, since the beginning of 1775 Madec also lost interest in Chevalier's project, partly for lack of response from France, and partly for the disappointment of not getting a King's Commission as Captain which had been promised to him by Chevalier when the latter first induced him to join the Imperial service to further the interests of the nation.[2] However, the opening of the Tatta project brought Chevalier and Madec into close co-operation again.

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[1] Barbé—*Le Nabob René Madec*, p. 106—Madec's letter to Chevalier defending his conduct.

[2] *Ibid*, pp. 111-116.

It was about the middle of 1775 that the Tatta project was first mooted, although the exact time cannot be ascertained. On this point there are two letters on which we can depend for some indication, at least for forming a guess. The first is a letter from Modave to Moracin at Pondicherry, dated 19th October 1775, in which he stated that the Mughal Emperor first made the proposal to him some time after his joining the Imperial service, i.e., some time after April 1775.[3] The second is Madec's letter to the Governor and Intendant of the Isle of France, dated 10th October 1775, in which Madec stated that the proposal was first made to him by the Emperor a few months back when he was at Delhi on a temporary visit.[4] As regards the first overture in the matter, both Madec and Modave agree that it came from the Emperor himself, who was anxious for an alliance with France, and in order to procure a body of French troops without giving any overt cause of grievance to the English he made the offer of ceding the province of Tatta. But then the two differ as to which of them was first taken into confidence by the Emperor and asked to negotiate with the French Government. It was Madec who actually sent the proposal to the authorities in France, and in his letter (to be quoted later) to the Minister, de Sartine, he stated that it was to him alone that the Emperor first broached the subject. Modave on the other hand, in the letter referred to above, claimed the credit of being the first person to be taken into confidence by the Emperor and asked to negotiate with the King of France. It was, as he stated, because of the great esteem in which he was held by both the Emperor and his chief minister, Abdul Ahad Khan, who considered him as the fittest instrument for negotiating with the French Government. But out of gratitude for Madec, who had helped him in getting employment under the Emperor, he asked the Emperor to contact Madec for forwarding the proposal to France. It should be noticed here that the Emperor had no direct dealing with the Governor of Pondicherry, Law, although the latter had been in his service when he attacked Bihar as Prince Ali Gauhar; and although he was in communication with Chevalier in Bengal, he did not like to send his proposal to France through him lest it might leak out to the English who were dominant in Bengal. Emile Barbé in his biography of Madec ridicules the claim of Modave to have taken any active part in the discussions at the Delhi Court with regard to the Tatta project.[1] It is interesting, however, to note Madec's letter to the Governor and Intendant of the Isle of France, dated Agra, 10th October 1775 (referred to above): "A few months back this monarch (the Emperor) expressed to me a great desire to enter into relations with the King (of France). I was not in a position to pursue the matter, having been obliged to return to my estates. Fortunately, there was at Delhi a person to whom I could entrust this task. In fact, the Emperor, who had esteem and respect for this person, did not make any difficulty in disclosing to him all his plans. As a result the Emperor took the decision to write to the King." There is hardly any doubt that it refers to Modave.

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[1] A.N.—Ministère des Colonies: C-2, 140.

[2] Barbé—*Le Nabob René Madec,* pp. 127-129.

[3] P. A. ms. 283—Correspondence of Modave.

[4] Barbé, *op. cit.,* pp. 158-159.

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[1] Barbé—*Le Nabob René Madec.* pp. 155-158.

The proposal in essence was that the Emperor would cede the town and province of Tatta to France in exchange for a small body of French troops to be permanently employed in the Imperial service. The French would naturally make Tatta their principal establishment in the East, and keep a considerable number of troops there. That would enable the Emperor to expect French military help on a large scale in case of a war with the English. Tatta was far away from the English possessions in India, and English susceptibilities were not likely to be roused by France sending a large body of troops for the occupation of that far-off province. Indeed, it was only through the possession of Tatta that France could render any considerable military help to the Emperor in times of necessity, as otherwise the despatch of a body of French troops to Delhi would have been regarded as a *casus belli* by the English. While the proposal was put forward, it was made clear that merely a grant from the Emperor would not put the French in occupation of the province; they would have to wrest it from those who were in actual possession, which they could easily do with a few thousand men. The Emperor asked Madec to send the proposal to France giving all the necessary details, and he himself addressed a letter in general terms to the King of France and another one to the Governor of Pondicherry expressing full confidence in Madec. His chief minister, Abdul Ahad Khan, also wrote a similar letter to the French Minister, de Sartine. Unfortunately, these letters are lost and we know of them only from the correspondence of Madec, Modave and Chevalier.

Before we turn to Madec's letter to the French Minister, with its two accompanying *mémoires* giving full details about the Tatta project, it is interesting to examine the diplomacy of Shah Alam in making the proposal. For more than three years he had been intriguing with Chevalier for a body of French troops, and since France did not evince any interest in the matter he now proposed to give her sufficient inducement by offering a remote territory which did not really belong to him and which had been torn away from the Mughal Empire by the Afghan rulers many years ago. If France accepted the offer, the Emperor would be in an advantageous position by holding the balance between the English in Bengal and the French in the lower Indus valley. It was a piece of subtle diplomacy by which the Emperor could improve his position without any cost whatsoever.

Madec's letter to the Minister, de Sartine,[1] began with an account of his own career, which was necessary because of his lack of official standing or social position in France. He next explained why he was sending the Emperor's proposal direct and not through the more regular channel of Chevalier or Law de Lauriston. It was because of the insistence of the Emperor himself, who was afraid that the secret might leak out to the English if transmitted through Chandernagore or Pondicherry. When Madec pleaded that he was not sufficiently well-known to the Government in France to be able to deal with such important political negotiations, the Emperor replied that he would remove the difficulty by writing to Law to inform the French Minister that he had full confidence in Madec. Then Madec narrated how during a temporary visit to Delhi a few months back he was called by the Emperor in secret and told the following: "I would like to know from you if I may draw some help and support from your nation. We are in general very little informed about the state of affairs in Europe. I am not unaware, however, that the King of France is the greatest and the most powerful of the European Princes. But, I am afraid, the events of the last war have made your nation lose interest in the affairs of India. I think so principally from the little effort it has made since the Peace to re-establish itself in its old possessions and to present itself there on a respectable footing. Nevertheless, I would very much like it to think seriously of securing a solid ground there and of establishing close relations with me. The English are, it is said, your natural enemies, and I have just grounds to consider them as mine too. If therefore I know the disposition of the King of France, I would propose things to him which would be mutually useful to us. The French establishments, surrounded on all sides by English possessions, must remain in a state of mediocrity till the time when a new war will change the face of things. It is not there that I can help the French. But if the King would desire other possessions, I can cede them to him, which according to me would be extremely advantageous; and I ask you to write to France, conveying my ideas and also seeking to ascertain the intentions of the King". Madec represented that he did not have any official status in France for such an important mission, but the Emperor replied that in order to add weight to his proposals he would write a personal letter to the King of France, worded in general terms and without going into details, but stating that he had entrusted Madec to make his intentions known to the King. He actually handed over the letter to Madec, and Abdul Ahad Khan, the chief minister, also gave him a personal letter to the French Minister, de Sartine.

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[1] Barbé—*Le Nabob René Madec,* pp. 140-147.

Madec continued: "It is for you now to decide if the Nation can draw any advantage from the dispositions of the Emperor, but I must inform you of them. He proposes to cede to the King the town and *Soubah* of Tatta-Bakar. It is a province situated at the mouth of the *Scindi,* towards 25 degree of the northern latitude. The advantages of this cession have been given in a *mémoire* attached to this letter . . . . . I must not conceal from you that the Emperor in deciding to make such an important cession was induced principally by his own personal interests . . . . . He hopes that the French, established at Tatta-Bakar, will be either wholly or partially at his disposal and that he will make use of them to suppress the insolence of the great vassals of his Empire on one side, and on the other to show to the English a corps of French troops ready to oppose their ambitious claims".

Attached to this letter were two *mémoires* giving details about the project, one "on the town and province of Tatta-Bakar" and the other "on the present political state of affairs in Hindusthan". In the first *mémoire*[1] Madec stated that the province of which Tatta was the capital included four *Sarkars* and fifty *Parganas* and had a revenue of twenty-four lakhs of rupees, equivalent to six million livres. The town, being situated on a large river and surrounded by a strong wall, offered great advantages for commerce as well as defence. The province also was easily defensible, being surrounded by forests, deserts and mountains, and the only access was either down the river from the north or up from the south. The river was navigable almost in its entire course i.e., four to five hundred leagues. Tatta could not be reached from the sea by large ships, but medium-sized vessels could move up with ease. The place had great commercial possibilities because of the rich hinterland, the Punjab, the famous products of which would be attracted there for export if a European settlement was established. Madec next pointed out that the grant of the Mughal Emperor did not mean an easy and immediate possession for the French. "The fact is not concealed in this *Mémoire* that the Emperor in transferring to the King the proprietorship of this town and *Soubah* only gives up his own rights without engaging himself to hand over to him immediate possession." The country was actually in the possession of the king of Kandahar and partly of the Sikhs. But it was not difficult to wrest it from their hands, since no opposition was to be expected from the people in general, and what little resistance there might be from the ruling classes could be met by "a few cannon shots".

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[1] Barbé—*Le Nabob René Madec,* pp. 161-165.

"The nature of things will make Tatta and its *Soubah* the principal establishment of the French nation in India. It is a country completely new to Europeans. It has not been in the least devastated by the long succession of wars and calamities which have afflicted the Empire for thirty years. The Mohammedan Government is, by its very nature, extremely tyrannical and aggressive. Experience shows us that Indians accommodate themselves perfectly to European administration as soon as they are put under the yoke . . . . . For this operation to have complete success, it is necessary to employ a corps of 3,000 troops which will suffice for taking possession of the place and maintaining order there". As regards the expenses of the military operation, Madec expected that they could be met from the revenue of the province and from the contributions to be levied on the neighbouring vassals of the Emperor. Since the Emperor had been prompted to make the cession by the hope of getting a body of French troops in his service, Madec suggested that out of the 3,000 men to be sent to Tatta a detachment of 1,000 should remain with the Emperor. Madec then stressed the need of raising 12,000 sepoys, since effective military operations in India required a sepoy force at least four times larger than the European element. It was necessary therefore to send from France additional arms to equip this huge body of sepoy force and also a large artillery of the best standard then known in India. If the Minister accepted the proposal regarding Tatta, Madec begged to be given the command of the detachment to remain in the service of the Emperor. "Besides a knowledge of affairs in general of this country and of the manner to deal with them, a perfect understanding of the language is an advantage which requires a long time to acquire. My own troops, which the King can already consider as his own, will augment the forces of this detachment; and I dare assure him that being accustomed to the method of warfare practised in this country they will be very useful to His Majesty's service".

In the second *mémoire* Madec aimed at giving a picture of the political condition of the Mughal Empire at the time.[1] "My object in this *mémoire* is not to seek out the causes which have precipitated the Mughal Empire to fall into the condition of decadence and anarchy in which we find it today . . . . . I wish simply to describe its present condition and to give a correct and precise idea about the ambitious plans of the English". Madec then narrated how after the invasion of Nadir Shah the Emperor lost not only his prestige but also his rights of sovereignty. The land beyond the Indus passed under Afghan rule, and that between the Indus and Delhi under the control of the Sikhs. The Rohillas and the Nawab of Oudh became virtually independent. The Jats, the Rajputs and the Marathas all carved out dominions at the expense of the Emperor. "The Emperor in the midst of so many diverse interests . . . . . . can only play a very tragic role. Nevertheless, if chance would place on the throne of the Mogol a young prince having vigour, courage and ambition, it is probable that he will quickly recover a part of his rights which his predecessors had lost."

Madec continued: "The Prince who occupies the throne today appears to be as suitable as any other to carry through this great revolution. He attained sovereign power at a mature age. He has more understanding and knowledge of the world and of its affairs than what men like him generally have". After referring to his adventures as a Prince, Madec wrote, "From the knowledge of his character that I have, I dare affirm that he would conduct himself in a different manner if he were assured against the fear of the English by an alliance with us". He then stressed the necessity of preventing the Emperor from throwing himself into the arms of the English. "The English are working with great perseverance to change the views of the Emperor towards them . . . . . He will not decide that way until he is forced to do so as his last point of defence, I mean, when he will feel that he has no more help or hope from any quarter. That is the real spirit of the letter which he wrote to the King. It is important to examine fully in France if it would suit the interests of His Majesty to abandon this Prince to his fate and to leave the ground free to the English".

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[1] Barbé—*Le Nabob René Madec,* pp. 170-176.

The original intention of Madec was to send his letters to France direct without the intermediary of Chevalier. It was partly because of the insistence of the Emperor on maintaining the closest secrecy and partly because of Madec's disappointment at not getting a King's Commission promised by Chevalier. Anyway, he soon realised that in view of his lack of official status his proposal to the French Government had no chance of being even considered seriously unless supported by Chevalier, the accredited representative of France in Bengal and specially entrusted with dealing with the Mughal Emperor. So he communicated his proposal to Chevalier in November 1775,[1] and it was in fact due to Chevalier's active interest that the Tatta project received serious consideration in France. How much Chevalier's support to the proposal was useful will be evident from the following letter of Kerscao whom Madec had sent to carry his letters to the Isle of France, to be transmitted from there to Paris. "He (the Governor of the Isle of France) has sent your letter to the Minister; you are in very high favour . . . . . I did very well to have brought letters from Chevalier because it is on them that M. De Ternay (the Governor) based himself in writing to the Minister".[1] This is fully confirmed by the letter of the Governor and Intendant of the Isle of France to the Minister in Paris. "M. Chevalier, commandant of the French establishment in Bengal, must have informed you of the readiness of the Mogol Emperor to transfer the proprietorship of Tatta to the King . . . . . The commandant must have added that the Mogol Emperor was induced to make this cession only by the consideration of his own interest and in the hope that he would be able to get for his service some French troops sent for the administration of Tatta. Nothing is more appropriate to confirm these dispositions of the Prince than the *mémoire* which we have the honour to forward to you herewith and which has been sent to us by one M. Madec, with whom M. Chevalier has been in correspondence for a long time."[2]

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[1] Barbé—*Le Nabob René Madec*, p. 135.

Fortunately for Madec and Chevalier, there was a change in the attitude of the French Government in 1776. As the War of American Independence seemed imminent, the French Government for the first time began to give serious consideration to the various proposals for diplomatic and military interference in India. An interesting document in the Colonial Archives throws light on the favourable reception given to the Tatta project in France at the beginning of 1776.[3] It is entitled *"Secret Affairs : Picture of the political conditions in India on the 1st of March 1776"*; and although unsigned it is perhaps the summary of an opinion presented to the King by the Minister, de Sartine. "The Mogol has made proposals to us by two different intermediaries, one by sieur Chevalier and the other by sieur Madec. Through Chevalier the Emperor asks for a corps of four to five thousand men to be sent to Delhi. Through Madec he offers to cede us his rights over Tatta and its dependencies . . . . . on condition that a corps of troops would be sent to him from Tatta. These two proposals accord perfectly with our existing diplomatic relations in India". The author then observed that although the proposal sent by Madec was not considered as seriously as that by Chevalier, because Madec being a soldier of fortune was regarded less reliable, his proposal was in fact even better. The ultimate object of both the proposals was the same, namely to strengthen the position of the Emperor; but Madec's proposal was better for two reasons: first, the resentment of the English would be much less if the French troops were sent in the first instance to a distant place like Tatta than if they were sent direct to Delhi; and second, the possession of Tatta would give the French a safe base where reinforcements could be sent without any English opposition and where the French forces in north India could retire if military exigencies required the abandonment of Delhi.

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[1] Barbé—*Le Nabob René Madec,* p. 161.

[2] *Ibid,* p. 160.

[3] Reproduced almost in full by Barbé, pp. 177-179.

But while the French Government was considering the Tatta project in a leisurely fashion, things were changing fast in India. Madec suffered some military reverses which entailed heavy financial losses and a weakening of the strength of his corps. His relations with Najaf Khan, the General of the Emperor, became strained, culminating in his being deprived of his old *Jagir* in exchange for one much less lucrative. Then for nearly eighteen months since he first forwarded the proposal about Tatta he did not receive any news either from Chevalier or from France, and he naturally concluded that there was little possibility of the proposal being accepted. The sudden change in his fortune and the lack of response to his Tatta project decided Madec early in 1777 to leave north India and return to France by way of Pondicherry. The thing was that soon after he was informed by Madec about the Tatta project, Chevalier sent an agent named Montvert with letters for both Madec and the Emperor. Montvert was authorised to negotiate with the Emperor, in concert with Madec, for the grant of a *Farman* ceding Tatta to France. It was Montvert's negligence which was responsible for Madec getting no news from Chevalier till April 1777. But the mischief had been done, Madec had made up his mind to quit north India, and no amount of persuasion from Chevalier could dissuade him. He wrote to Chevalier that because of the long delay in accepting the offer it was difficult to persuade the Emperor to renew it; and then leaving negotiations with the Emperor in the hands of the Raja of Gohad and Visage, entrusted with the command of the remnant of his corps in the Raja's service, he started for Pondicherry about the end of May 1777.[1]

The departure of Madec from north India dealt a severe blow to French diplomatic enterprises centring round the Court of Delhi. But before the news reached Paris the French Government had decided to send out Col. Montigny to India to report from first hand knowledge on the feasibility of undertaking the Tatta enterprise. Montigny was instructed to work in concert with Madec and to conclude negotiations with the Mughal Emperor. He arrived at Agra about the middle of 1778, and there learnt for the first time that Madec had left. He, however, remained at the camp of Najaf Khan for some time, collected information about Tatta and ultimately wrote to the Minister that it was the most fantastic project that had ever been submitted to the Government. It is not unlikely that if Madec had remained in north India, his mere presence would have changed things and Montigny might have been brought to a more favourable view about the Tatta project.[2]

It is not the place here to pass any judgment on the Tatta project. Its advantages and the ease with which it could be executed were stated most clearly by Madec in his letters to the Minister noticed already. On the other hand, its difficulties and disadvantages were pointed out equally clearly by Law and Bellecombe in their *mémoires,* as we shall see in the next chapter. Where contemporaries like Chevalier and Madec on the one hand and Law and Bellecombe on the other, all equally competent and experienced in Indian affairs, differ so widely, it is difficult to pass any judgment. But one thing may be said here in the light of the actual results of the French expedition of 1782-83, and that is if instead of frittering away her resources on the Coromandel Coast France had attempted a landing at Tatta and a conquest of the province, she might have achieved some tangible success. She had for practically the whole period naval supremacy in Indian waters, and her land troops totalled the number demanded by Madec, namely

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[1] For the exchange of correspondence between Chevalier and Madec, see Barbé—*Le Nabob René Madec,* pp. 210-217.

[2] It is interesting to note that many years later the plan of conquering Sind was revived under Napoleon Bonaparte—Archives des Affaires Etrangères: Asie, Mémoires et Documents, Vol. IV.

3,000 men. With these resources she might have established her power in Sind, where there was little possibility of an active opposition by the English. Whether her conquest of Sind would have led to any further result, namely a solid alliance with the Mughal Emperor and an eventual attack on Bengal, may be regarded as doubtful; but even without that, the expedition would not have been as barren of results as it actually turned out.

MODAVE

While noticing the projects of Chevalier and Madec for the establishment of French influence in north India and in the province of Tatta it is worthwhile turning our attention to the correspondence of another noteworthy Frenchman of the period, Comte de Modave.[1] Modave no doubt came to India purely as a soldier of fortune, to seek service under one of the Indian Princes. But as a cultured, enlightened and patriotic Frenchman, he could not altogether escape the natural desire to advance his national interest, although being primarily concerned with his own private gain; and that gives his correspondence not a negligible importance in connection with the French plans and projects of the period.

Louis-Laurent Dolisy, Comte de Modave, first came to India in 1773. Before that he was for some time Governor of Madagascar and later turned into a planter. His plantation scheme brought him financial ruin, and it was in order to retrieve his fortune that he came to India in search of a military career under one of the Indian Princes. From Pondicherry he came to Bengal where he remained for eleven months, most of the time in Calcutta. He had thus an opportunity of seeing from close quarters the English military strength and system of civil administration. In a letter to Bellecombe, dated 1st May 1777,[2] he wrote that, contrary to the wishful thinking of many Frenchmen, the English position in Bengal was quite secure, being based on two firm foundations, military strength and a benevolent civil administration. The English had 3,700 European troops, divided into three Brigades stationed at Calcutta, Kasimbazar and Patna. There were 27,000 sepoys, divided into battalions and commanded by European officers. There was a large and well-served artillery supporting each of the three Infantry Brigades. "I have seen this military machine and I have examined it carefully. I can assure you that it is not to be slighted in any way, and that being supported by the internal resources of the country and the fort of Calcutta it can be quite sufficient for defence" He had also seen the fort, a plan of which, he believed, must have been sent to Bellecombe by Chevalier who had taken it secretly from the office of Major Polier (also a Frenchman), the chief engineer of the fort. Modave had great praise for the English administration in Bengal and particularly for Hastings, whose political sagacity was responsible for making "the British Government loved". Hastings had established law and order in the province, recognised the proprietary rights of landlords and attempted to combine the principles of English law with the laws and customs of the Hindus and Muslims. The interests of the natives were completely protected by law, and in fact sometimes the scale of justice turned so much in their favour that, as an Englishman complained to Modave, "it was difficult to get justice against a Bengali".

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[1] His letters are preserved in the Pondicherry Archives (ms. 283) and form an important collection of original manuscripts there. One letter in particular, written to Bellecombe and dated 1st May 1777, is of the greatest importance as containing a detailed narrative of his adventures in India.

[2] P. A. ms. 283.

From Bengal Modave went to Lucknow in the hope of getting employment under Shuja-ud-daulah. There were many well-known Frenchmen in the service of the Nawab of Oudh at the time, like Gentil, Aumont and Visage. Through their efforts Modave succeeded in getting an appointment on a monthly salary of four thousand rupees. But immediately after, the sudden death of Shuja-ud-daulah in January 1775 upset all arrangements. The English put effective pressure upon his successor not to give any employment to Modave, and in fact all the Frenchmen in the service of the Nawab of Oudh were thrown out. Modave next thought of employment under the Emperor, Shah Alam, and wrote to Madec, who was then in the service of Najaf Khan and had great influence in the Imperial Court. He reached Delhi in April 1775 and through the good offices of Madec secured a profitable appointment in the Imperial service. He was given a salary of 2,500 rupees a month, besides an extra allowance for his personal retinue. After the terms had been settled Modave had his first audience with the Emperor, where he was received "with the same solemnity which since then I have seen practised for an ambassador of Timur Shah, king of Kandahar". For his residence he was given the palace of Shayista Khan. A part of the troops under his command was garrisoned there, the remainder being stationed in the fort to guard the person of the Emperor. The fort of Salimgarh and the whole of the Imperial artillery were also to have been placed under his control.

In the letter to Bellecombe referred to above, Modave gave a brief account of the negotiations with the Mughal Emperor about the cession of Tatta to France. He wrote that after the terms of appointment had been settled he used to go "to the *Darbar* of the Minister (Abdul Ahad Khan) every day and three or four times a week to the audience of the *Padcha* . . . . . This Prince expressed to me a great desire to enter into correspondence with the King (of France). I believe, it came from a hope to secure some military help with which to impose his authority on his great vassals . . . . . I come to this conclusion because of the attempts which this Prince made on several occasions to open a correspondence with the King of England . . . . . As I felt myself greatly obliged to Madec, I wished to turn in his favour the desire which I saw in the *Padcha* to write to the King. I myself made the model of the letter.[1] It was translated into Persian. The Minister of the *Padcha* wrote on his side to M. de Sartine. Madec gave an account to the Minister of the object of this letter and of affairs in Hindusthan in general. The *Padcha* had authorised him to offer to the King *Parawanas* for the town of Tatta-Bakar and of the the province of Sind". Modave then continued that the despatch of the Emperor's letter to Chandernagore, to be transmitted from there to Paris, met with an accident in the Ganges. "The letter of the *Padcha* was so much spoilt that it was no longer presentable. The packet of Madec for M. Sartine did not suffer from this accident. The Minister must have received it, but I do not know what conclusion he will draw from it in the absence of the letter of the Great Mogol to the King mentioned in the despatches. There were duplicates of all these documents in the hands of Madec. I do not know if he has made any use of them, since I left Hindusthan a few weeks after learning of the disaster to the packet".

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[1] The original draft is given in Modave's *Voyage du Bengale a Delhi*. A. N.—Ministère des Colonies: C-2, 256.

In another letter, addressed to Moracin, Intendant at Pondicherry, and dated 19th October 1775, Modave gave an account of the part he had played in the negotiations. "This negotiation which I had conducted at Delhi required, as you can well understand, some details to show its merit in France. It is for this object that I have come to Agra where Madec resides. As a result, he has sent to the Minister a short account of his personal history, a detailed and well-thought-out account of the intentions and views of the *Padcha* and a political sketch of the present state of the Mughal Empire . . . . . and he added to it a *mémoire* on the town and *Soubah* of Tatta-Bakar, with some observations on the advantages of this acquisition and on the means not only to secure but also to extend them. That is the principal object of the account which M. Madec has rendered to the Court. I did not wish to be named in it in order to leave him the credit for it and also not to bring misfortune on the affair. If it succeeds, I shall be well rewarded for my troubles by the advantage that the Nation may draw out of it".

Within a few months Modave had reason to feel dissatisfied with the service of the Emperor, who was profuse in his promises but had neither the means nor the will to fulfil them. He never received even half the salary he was entitled to, and whenever he complained he was told that he should not worry about petty matters and that the Emperor had great schemes in his mind for him. In his distress he turned to Madec once more, who agreed to take him in his service. Modave stayed in Madec's camp for nearly five months, down to the siege of Dig, at the end of which finding his condition no better he decided to quit and asked Madec to settle his accounts. Madec was in great financial embarrassment after his recent defeat at the hands of the Rohillas and could pay only a quarter of the sum due to Modave. But he told Modave that he was shortly going back to Europe and in compensation of his arrears of salary would give him a part of his army, one Infantry battalion with artillery. Modave accepted the offer and wrote to the Emperor that he was returning to his service with a well-armed and well-trained force. He received letters of welcome from the Emperor and his minister, Abdul Ahad Khan, but as he was starting from Agra his arrangements were suddenly upset. Aumont, who had through the good offices of Modave been placed in charge of the administration of Madec's estates, now instigated Madec to take back the battalion he had given to Modave. Madec stopped Modave at Agra and demanded back his battalion on the ground that he had decided to postpone his departure from India on a recent communication from the Imperial Court (March 1775). Modave felt it useless to return to Delhi alone and decided to take the route to Hyderabad in the hope of getting employment under Nizam Ali.

On his arrival at Hyderabad Modave got an opportunity to present himself to Nizam Ali, but met with disappointment because of the instigation of a noble of the Court who was a pensioner of the Madras Government. He then wrote to de Lallée, and having received an encouraging response from him he went to Adoni, where he was given an appointment by Basalat Jang on a monthly salary of 600 rupees.

Modave regarded his service under Basalat Jang as purely temporary and hoped constantly to be able to find a better employment under Nizam Ali. He realised that the only way of attracting the notice of Nizam Ali was by organising a small corps of his own, well-armed and trained in the European fashion. His main difficulty was lack of money with which to procure arms. In a letter to Moracin, Intendant at Pondicherry, dated 1st May 1777, he begged to be supplied with 800 guns on credit, promising to repay the entire amount in eighteen months. He also entreated Bellecombe, in a second letter of the same date, to send him a letter of recommendation to Nizam Ali, and gave him an account of an interesting interview he had with the chief minister a few days after his arrival at Hyderabad. The minister told him that in spite of the pressure of the English against employing any Frenchman in his army, Nizam Ali was willing to offer him an appointment if he could give him service in the manner he wanted; and in that connection the minister enquired if he could raise a corps of European troops. Modave replied that "there was a large number of discontented and ill-paid men here and there who would not fail to join me as soon as they came to know that I was in a position to receive them", but he added that he could render greater service than merely collecting a number of vagabonds. He would "form a corps of sepoys, supported by a good artillery and led by white officers". He was then told that although the English and the French were at peace, he would be required to fight against the English if the Nawab broke with them, to which Modave replied that "from the moment I would be in his service his enemies would be mine". Next the minister complained that while Nizam Ali had been trying for years to open a correspondence with Pondicherry and had even written to France, he had not received any response to his overtures. He asked if Modave could help in transmitting a letter from Nizam Ali to the King of France and in getting a satisfactory reply. Modave replied that he "was not properly qualified to undertake a mission of that sort", but he pointed out that it would be irregular to address a letter directly to the King when there was at Pondicherry a General of the highest rank and "depository of the authority and confidence of His Majesty", assuring the minister that the new Governor would give a prompt and favourable reply. Modave wrote to Bellecombe, "This conversation was in the form of an interrogation. All my replies were written down and stamped with my seal and later this report was sent to the Nawab, but I have not heard anything further about it". He was left with an impression that if he had a corps of troops under him he would have been immediately offered employment by Nizam Ali, and that was why he implored Bellecombe to give him a letter of recommendation and to induce Moracin to send him the guns he required. As regards the political attitude of Nizam Ali, Modave wrote, "It is certain that this Prince has a sentiment of affection and preference for the French nation, but the great power of the English on the Coromandel Coast, and, between you and me, the little response he has found at Pondicherry have somewhat damped his goodwill".

From a note addressed to de Lallée, dated 10th July 1777, we learn that Bellecombe sent a letter to Modave for Nizam Ali dealing with the order of the King "to establish the old correspondence and friendship which existed before between our nation and the Princes of the House of Nizam-ul-Muluk". But there is no document to show whether Modave presented the letter to Nizam Ali and with what result. All that is known is that Modave suddenly fell ill and retired to Masulipatam where he died on the 22nd December 1777.[1]

GENTIL

In connection with French diplomatic projects relating to north India we may notice the efforts of another eminent Frenchman of the period, Jean-Baptiste-Joseph Gentil, who tried to create a sphere of influence for his nation through an alliance with the Nawab Wazir of Oudh. To be sure, Gentil did not play the same important part as Chevalier or Madec, and his diplomatic efforts never took any definite shape. But even then he cannot be left out of any account of French diplomacy in India because of his long residence at the Court of Shuja-ud-daulah, nearly twelve years, his intimate friendship with the Nawab, and his efforts to increase French influence in that area by organising a corps of French troops and persuading the Nawab to turn to France to protect him against the aggression of the English. Moreover, he was given an official status by the Government in Paris as the accredited French Resident at the Court of the Nawab of Oudh, and was honoured with the Cross of St. Louis in recognition of his patriotic efforts. Although after 1772 Chevalier did not place any trust in Shuja-ud-daulah, whom he regarded as having been completely won over by the English, Gentil, who was in closer contact and knew Shuja-ud-daulah better, believed that the Nawab's submission was not genuine, that at heart he wanted to regain his independence and lost territories, and that he was waiting only for the completion of administrative and military reorganisation before declaring himself openly against the English. Gentil wrote in his *Mémoires* that shortly before his death Shuja-ud-daulah had told him that given a few years' more time the English would be extirpated from Bengal. It was his unexpected death in January 1775 that upset the calculations of Gentil and led to the total extinction of French influence in Oudh.

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[1] P. A. ms. 5180.

Gentil first came out to India in 1752 with a regiment of Infantry and distinguished himself in service under Dupleix, Bussy and Lally. After 1761, like many of his compatriots, he offered his services to the Indian Princes. He first attached himself to Mir Kasim, Nawab of Bengal, and took part in his fight against the English. The most noteworthy event of his career during this period was his attempt to save the English prisoners at Patna, killed by Sombre under the orders of Mir Kasim. Soon after he took service under Shuja-ud-daulah and earned his confidence and respect to such an extent that after the battle of Buxar he was chosen to carry on negotiations with the English. The successful conclusion of the negotiations increased the prestige and influence of Gentil, who became an intimate adviser of the Nawab and specially charged with re-organising and training the remnants of the army which the treaty with the English permitted the Nawab to maintain. The Nawab even expressed a desire to take in his service a corps of French troops, and Gentil, who was also anxious to increase the influence of his nation in Oudh as a counterpoise to the English domination of Bengal, succeeded in forming at once a small corps of 400 men, later increased to 600, by collecting the French deserters from English service. Madec, the most prominent of these deserters, was appointed sergeant-major of the French corps. It was Gentil's generosity which saved such a large number of his compatriots from starvation. Most of them, however, as Modave remarked in his *Voyage du Bengale à Delhi,* were scoundrels and unfit for military service and they repaid Gentil with base ingratitude. According to Modave, far from increasing French influence in Oudh, they only brought discredit on their nation. However, Gentil felt that the mere presence of these Frenchmen in his army would inspire confidence in the Nawab of Oudh in the willingness of France to offer him military assistance. He did not doubt the sincerity of Shuja-ud-daulah's profession of friendship towards the French and believed that by gradual persuasion he would be able to conclude a treaty of alliance between the Nawab and the King of France.

Gentil proceeded slowly and did not put forward any definite scheme of alliance. But he kept himself in touch with the French Government and sent reports on the political situation in Oudh. In a letter, dated January 17, 1772, de Boynes, the Minister of Marine and Colonies, thanked him for the zeal he showed in working for national interest. "I know that you enjoy the complete confidence of Shuja-ud-daulah. Continue to keep up the goodwill of the Nawab in favour of the nation, and be assured that I shall procure from His Majesty due recognition of your services".[1] Modave in his *Voyage du Bengale à Delhi* narrates an interesting incident about this period. A private French merchant named Debraux came from Chandernagore to Fyzabad, then the capital of Shuja-ud-daulah. He had a meeting with Gentil and their conversation drifted to the possibility of an invasion of Bengal by the combined forces of the Nawab and the French. Later he stole from Gentil's room a *Parawana* dealing with some commercial concessions granted by the Nawab to two Englishmen. Then he hastily returned to France and posed as having been sent by the Nawab of Oudh to negotiate an alliance with France. He produced the *Parawana* as the Nawab's letter of authority. When it was translated and appeared to contain only commercial details, he pretended that the letter was in code and ultimately succeeded in imposing upon the credulity of the Minister. The Minister was favourably impressed and tried to pursue the matter further. Debraux was sent out to India as the Chief of the French factory at Patna, and Gentil was rewarded with the Cross of St. Louis. The whole thing was done behind the back of Chevalier, who was taken completely by surprise. Anyway, even before Chevalier came to know about the matter it leaked out to the English, and it was strongly rumoured in Calcutta that Shuja-ud-daulah, acting on the advice of Gentil, had written to the King of France for a military alliance. Although this particular incident of Debraux was a pure hoax, Shuja-ud-daulah was nevertheless inclined to come to an agreement with France for military assistance. In an interview with Modave he said that he wanted help from France but the main difficulty was that nothing was kept secret in the Government circles in Paris, and as an instance he pointed out that the granting of the Cross of St. Louis to Gentil was known in Calcutta much earlier than at Chandernagore.[1]

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[1] Gentil—*Mémoires sur l'Indoustan ou Empire Mogol*, p. 423.

Although the Debraux incident had no real importance, it had a profound effect on the English. Down to that time they had no objection to Gentil remaining in the service of Shuja-ud-daulah, although they brought pressure on the Nawab to dismiss some of the other Frenchmen, like Madec. But now they became suddenly aware of the possibility of the danger of an alliance between the Nawab and the French, and in order to eliminate such a danger they tried to persuade Shuja-ud-daulah to dismiss Gentil as well. Shuja-ud-daulah was unwilling at first, and to the pressing demands of the English he replied, "I am under great obligation to M. Gentil. Without him I would not have known you at all and would not have concluded any peace with you. He is very much attached to me and I shall be sorry to lose him. You see the reason why I take Frenchmen in my service; if I refuse his men, he would leave me. Therefore, I would rather break with you than send him back".[2] In fact, far from dismissing him, Shuja-ud-daulah on the other hand increased his salary from 25,000 to 32,000 rupees a year. The English were, however, persistent in their demand, and in a letter to the Minister, dated November 15, 1773, Gentil wrote that at the time of taking leave from Shuja-ud-daulah the Governor of Calcutta asked him to dismiss Gentil, adding that being a friend and an ally of the English it was not proper for the Nawab to keep a French officer under him. Shuja-ud-daulah at first gave his usual reply, but when pressed very strongly on the point he ultimately agreed to dismiss Gentil as soon as he could find a suitable pretext.[3] But the sincerity of Shuja-ud-daulah is proved by the fact that the pretext never came as long as he lived. It was only after his sudden death in January 1775 that his weak successor, under the pressure of the English, dismissed Gentil after nearly twelve years of loyal service. Gentil, if he had liked, could have taken service under the Emperor, Shah Alam, who offered him satisfactory terms. But he had a poor opinion about Shah Alam's abilities, and thinking that his political design could not be furthered under such a timid and weak-minded ruler, he rejected the offer and returned to Chandernagore on his way back to France. He must have utilised his stay at Chandernagore by discussing with Chevalier the prospects of French intervention in north Indian politics, and the latter gave him a letter addressed to the ex-minister Choiseul.[1]

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[1] Connected with the idea of an alliance between France and Shuja-ud-daulah there is an interesting *mémoire* in the Archives of the Colonial Ministry (C-2, Vol. 117), written in 1770. It will be noticed in Chapter VII.

[2] Gentil—*Mémoires sur l'Indoustan ou Empire Mogol,* pp. 272-273.

[3] B.N.F.Fr. (N.A.) 9366, pp. 462-466.

Gentil returned to France in 1778 and was rewarded by the King with the rank of a Colonel. He spent the remaining years of his life in quiet and literary pursuits and died in 1799. Apart from the political interest of his long residence in Oudh, Gentil has a claim to fame for another reason, perhaps more important. He was one of the earliest Europeans to attempt to make Indian civilisation and culture known to the West. He spent an enormous amount of money in purchasing Sanskrit, Bengali, Arabic and Persian manuscripts and presented them to the King on his return to France. In fact, the beginning of Indological studies in France may be traced to the first collection of Indian manuscripts made by Gentil. For this reason alone Gentil deserves to be remembered in India more than any other Frenchman, more than Dupleix,- Lally or Bussy, who played such an important part in the political history of the country.[2]

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[1] Gentil—*Mémoires sur l'Indoustan ou Empire Mogol*, pp. 423-428.

[2] Apart from collecting manuscripts, Gentil was also the author of the following works: (1) *Histoire Numismatique de l'Inde;* (2) *Histoire Abregée de l'Empire Mogol;* (3) *Abregée geographique de l'Inde;* (4) *Histoire des radjahs de l'Indoustan, depuis Barht jusqu'à Petaurah.*

CHAPTER VI

DIPLOMATIC PROJECTS; LAW DE LAURISTON AND BELLECOMBE

LAW DE LAURISTON

In the present chapter we shall notice the political views of two Governors of Pondicherry, Law de Lauriston (1765-1776) and Bellecombe (1777-1778), as expressed in their *mémoires* and letters to the Minister. The first official despatch of Law that may be reviewed is the *Mémoire sur les diverses Nations Européennes établies dans l' Inde,* written in 1767.[1] After giving a detailed account of the conditions of the various European settlements in India, including their administration, revenues, trade and commerce, military strength, and relations with country Powers, Law discussed at length the means required by the French to achieve equality in political influence with the English. Although he admitted that no improvement in the French position in India could be made without another trial of strength with the English, he advocated a policy of maintaining peace for at least four years in view of the completely defenceless condition of the French settlements, which in their existing state could be easily captured by the English in less than a month from the declaration of war. Nothing of course could be done to save Chandernagore, but the four years of peace could be utilised by the French to strengthen the garrisons in the other settlements, particularly at Pondicherry, to train up a large sepoy force, to enter into solid agreements with some of the country Powers, and to draw up a detailed and clear-cut plan of military operations in India.

Law suggested the following measures for the period of peace. First, the French should try to create an impression among the English that they were not much concerned about their lost possessions in India, and that in any case they were not in a position to resume hostilities till six or seven years later. Second, the person who would command the expeditionary force should be given detailed instructions one year before the commencement of hostilities so that the French could be on the move well in advance of the formal declaration of war. "The English took us by surprise during the last war..... It should be wished that they may be paid back in a similar fashion" The advance information was also necessary to secure the alliance of some of the country Powers. The political situation in India changed so swiftly that in making arrangements with the Indian Princes it was necessary to fix a definite date for the commencement of hostilities; and even if there be no declaration of war in Europe by that date, French troops must nevertheless appear as the auxiliaries of the Indian Princes. Third, positive orders and necessary funds must be sent at the earliest opportunity for fortifying Pondicherry, Mahé and Karikal, and for raising a sepoy force of two thousand men, to be organised in such a fashion that it could be quadrupled in an instant without augmenting the number of officers. It was also necessary for the French to possess a port in India where their vessels could find shelter in all seasons and undergo repairs. The most suitable port for that purpose was Trinkomali, and an attempt could be made to secure from the Dutch the old French territory in the Bay of Trinkomali, with the right of erecting fortifications, but on the clear condition of refraining from communicating with the interior of the country or carrying on trade and comerce, so as not to injure the rights and interests of the Dutch. Finally, steps must be taken to put the Isles of France and Bourbon in a proper state of defence and to store there all the munitions and other equipments required for military operations in India.

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[1] P. A. ms. 100. It is a lengthy document of 165 pages.

Law next stressed the need of having naval superiority in Indian waters. He admitted that the French could wage a purely maritime war, the object being to destroy the enemy's trade and commerce, for which it would be sufficient to have about a dozen frigates cruising near the mouth of the Ganges, off Ceylon, along the Malabar Coast, at the entrance to the Red Sea and in the Persian Gulf. But for a wider kind of warfare, necessitating large-scale land operations in different parts of the country, the French must have an effective naval superiority. "He, who will be master on the sea, will be so on land as well sooner or later. That is an incontestable axiom, at least so far as colonies are concerned".

Regarding the plan of operations, Law indicated four points of attack,—Calcutta, Madras, Masulipatam and Bombay. Of the four, he considered Calcutta as the most desirable for delivering the first surprise attack, since Bengal was the source of the English power in India, although he admitted that the opposition to be encountered there would be much greater than anywhere else. For a surprise attack on Calcutta the French would require 6,000 European troops, 2,000 sepoys and about 2,000 marines. With these numbers it was reasonable to expect success, although the English had about 4,000 European troops and 25,000 well-trained sepoys; but the main difficulty lay in piloting a large number of troopships from the mouth of the Ganges and that in secrecy. The next point of attack was Madras. Provided the French had naval supremacy, an expeditionary force of 4,000 European troops, 4,000 sepoys and 2,000 marines would be sufficient to compel the English, who had only 2,000 European troops and 12,000 sepoys, to shut themselves up within the fort of Madras. It was likely that they would avoid any decisive engagement before the arrival of reinforcements from Bengal. So if the siege of Madras dragged on for a long time, the French would have to do two things; first, to secure the alliance of Haidar Ali who would overrun the whole of the Carnatic, and second, to send a few strong frigates to the mouth of the Ganges to intercept reinforcements from Bengal. If, however, such considerable land forces be not available as would be required for an attack on Calcutta or Madras, the first blow could be delivered against Masulipatam. The capture of that place and the possession of the Northern Sarkars through an alliance with Nizam Ali would drive a wedge between the English possessions in Bengal and those on the Coromandel Coast. For success in this enterprise naval supremacy would be an essential requirement, to intercept reinforcements from Bengal to Madras. Land operations would require about 2,000 European troops and an equal number of marines and of sepoys, provided the English could be kept engaged in the

Carnatic with the help of a southern Power. The fourth point of attack was Bombay, which would provide the French with a good port for all seasons. The possession of Bombay would make it easy to capture Surat and all the small English factories on the Malabar Coast. For a successful attack on Bombay the French would require at least 3,000 European troops, besides marines.

Finally, Law urged the necessity of making an official declaration about the aims of the French policy in India, in the form of a manifesto to the different Indian Powers. It must be unequivocally stated that the French had no intention of carving out dominions in India, that they had come only to liberate the Indian Princes from the yoke of the English, and that they would keep no more territories to themselves than what would be required to meet their expenses in India.

We may next notice another *mémoire* of Law entitled *Observations sur l'état politique de l'Inde,* written in February 1777 and intended to enlighten Bellecombe, his successor as Governor of Pondicherry, on the political situation in India and the means required to revive French influence with the help of some of the Indian Powers.[1] In this *mémoire* Law gave a detailed account of the position of the English in India, their military strength and their policy with respect to the country Powers. He also discussed the strength of the principal Indian Powers and their mutual relations, always based on jealousy and suspicion. He drew a clear picture of the weak and defenceless condition of the French settlements, and then gave his views on how to build up an anti-English coalition among the country Powers.

While discussing the policy of the English with respect to the country Powers, Law wrote that it was based on the principle of perpetuating the existing division and disunity among them in order to keep the English possessions safe from any combined attack. The only Indian Powers who gave some cause for anxiety to the English were Nizam Ali, his brother Basalat Jang, the Marathas of Poona and Haidar Ali. Although there was no direct clash of interests between the English and Nizam Ali, they kept a strict watch on his relations with Haidar Ali and the Marathas. Basalat Jang gave them some worry by keeping in his service a party of French troops commanded by de Lallée. With Haidar Ali, their former enemy, the English were for the time being on friendly terms. This *rapprochement* was the direct consequence of the arrogant conduct of the French Commandant of Mahé, Duprat and Repentigny, who had interfered in the quarrels of the neighbouring Princes and had not only gone against Haidar's interests but had even threatened him with war.[1] Although the actions of the two Chiefs were promptly disowned by the Pondicherry Government, they left a deep impression upon the mind of Haidar, who came to look upon the French with increasing suspicion. The coolness between the French and Haidar was promptly exploited by the English at Bombay and Tellicherry, who tried to win over Haidar to their side and succeeded in obliterating the old bitterness of the first Anglo-Mysore war. How far the English had won over Haidar was evident from their venturing on the first war with the Marathas for the possession of Salsette and Bassein, which they would not have undertaken if they had not been sure about the friendly disposition of Haidar. In his bitterness against the French Haidar not only became reconciled with his old enemies, the English, but even approached the Dutch authorities at Cochin for a body of Dutch troops to replace the Frenchmen in his service, although ultimately the project did not materialise because of the refusal of the Batavia Government. Law considered it a very difficult task for the French to gain back the friendship of Haidar and to persuade him to enter into an anti-English coalition with the Marathas and Nizam Ali. But at the same time he felt that Haidar's friendly relations with the English need not worry the French very much, since in the ultimate analysis his policy would depend entirely on his own interest, and he would throw over the English the moment he would find that he had anything to gain by allying himself with the French. The fact was that "he is a soldier who thinks only of himself, who at heart detests Europeans of whatever nation they may be, who will nevertheless make use of them for his own interests because he knows their military talents". Hence the French also in their eagerness to gain his alliance must not think that they could control his policy with their troops in his service as the English controlled the policies of their *Nawabs* and *Rajas*.

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[1] P. A. ms. 238. It was published in 1913, being edited by Martineau,

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[1] See Chapter IV, section on Mahé.

The Power about which the English had reason to feel most concerned was the Maratha Confederacy. "If all the members who compose it are united and well-directed, it alone would suffice to destroy the English power because of the manner in which the Marathas make war; burning and devastating the country, they would destroy the source of revenue and consequently deprive the English and their allies of the means of maintaining their forces. That is the only Power, moreover, sufficiently spread out to be able to attack the English in all their possessions at the same time, in Bengal as well as on the Coasts of Orissa, Coromandel and Malabar". But the English had succeeded in creating disunity among the Marathas, a situation which they had fully exploited in their recent war.

Law next referred to the prevailing indifference in France to her Indian possessions. There was a growing feeling that it was not necessary for the French to make any exertions for the destruction of the English power in India, which must fall one day by the sheer weight of its own expansion. People believed that there must rise an Indian genius one day, who, profiting by the experience of European military technique and combining all the Indian Powers together, would succeed in driving out the English. Such an impression, Law considered, was based on "the memory of an unfortunate war, fear of exposing oneself (to further losses) and spirit of economy". The indifference was all the more regrettable since it was not impossible for the French to overthrow the English power with the help of a coalition of the Indian Princes. In fact, such a coalition together with the terms of an alliance with France had been proposed by the Marathas as early as 1772. "The Minister must have been informed about it and the whole circumstances must have been clearly explained to him by M. Beylié who reached France at the beginning of 1776". While not minimising the difficulty of forming a coalition of Indian Powers, Law did not think it insuperable. The project put forward by the Marathas in 1772 for an alliance among themselves, Nizam Ali, Basalat Jang and the French could be revived once more in spite of the events which had taken place since then, but the greatest problem was how to draw Haidar Ali also into the league. "To succeed in making a treaty of peace between him on one side and the Marathas, Nizam Ali and Basalat Jang on the other would be a masterpiece of diplomacy". Law offered some suggestions for the successful formation of an anti-English coalition: to fix a definite time in advance for the arrival of French forces in India; to allot to each Power a particular region for military operations in order to avoid jealousy and dispute; to draw up a definite plan of division of territories among the Confederates; and lastly to make a solemn declaration that the French had no intention of carving out a dominion for themselves, except what was required to meet their military and administrative expenses. Finally, Law advised the necessity of winning the favour and support of the great *Seths* or bankers, who by virtue of their wealth wielded tremendous influence over all the governments in India and who were largely instrumental in bringing about the revolution in Bengal in 1757.

About the plan of operations, Law again discussed the relative advantages and disadvantages of four points of attack, —Calcutta, Madras, Masulipatam and Bombay. He advocated the concentration of all French forces in one theatre rather than distributing them in small detachments in different parts of the country. As necessary preparations for the outbreak of hostilities he urged the need of fortifying Mahé, Yanam and Karikal, besides Pondicherry, and suggested an important administrative change, namely the concentration of authority over all the French possessions to the east of the Cape of Good Hope in the hands of one Commandant-General with his seat in the Isle of France. The Commandant-General was to have a deputy under him, who would be responsible for maintaining relations with the Indian Powers and in times of war would have complete control over all military affairs. The Governor of Pondicherry was to be concerned with only routine administrative work, including trade and commerce, with control over the subordinate settlements. The subordination of the Indian settlements to the Isle of France was necessitated by the fact that the latter being an isolated post was better suited than

Pondicherry to serve as a base for making secret military preparations without the knowledge of the English.

Law next gave a comparison between the military resources of the English and those of the French. The French did not possess a single base in India in a proper state of defence and the arsenal of Pondicherry did not have adequate munitions either for offence or for defence. It was difficult even to arm a small detachment of 400 persons for a campaign. There were only 200 men in the artillery, 800 in the Regiment of Pondicherry of whom not more than 500 being fit for active service, and 200 sepoys with no experience of war. Law considered that even in a time of peace Pondicherry must have an artillery force of 400 men and a garrison of 2,000 Europeans and 2,000 sepoys, the latter being so organised as to be capable of being quadrupled in number on the outbreak of war. As against the meagre resources of the French, the English had 35,000 sepoys in Bengal, 20,000 on the Coromandel and Orissa Coasts, and 15,000 on the Malabar Coast. They had about 10,000 European troops in all, 4,000 in Bengal, about the same number on the Coromandel and Orissa Coasts, and 2,000 on the Malabar Coast. Besides, they possessed throughout the country "fortified places, well-stocked with munitions of all kinds, and immense revenues which enabled them not only to augment their forces but also to cross us in our negotiations with the Indian Princes". It was all the more necessary therefore that the French must make a good beginning, since the advantages of the English might be neutralised to some extent only by a brilliant success in the first attack.

Law concluded his *mémoire* with an account of the French partisan armies in the service of the different Indian Princes, with a view to dispel the prevailing notion in France that their number was quite considerable and that they could be all recalled and induced to join the expeditionary force to be sent out to India. He stated that the total number of such Frenchmen was by the most favourable calculation not more than 800. In the service of Haidar Ali there was a small cavalry force of 100 men, the majority being French, commanded by Russel who had succeeded Hugel after the latter's death. The Commander and the three or four officers under him held King's commissions. Law kept up a regular correspondence with Russel, but in secret. in order not to rouse the jealousy of the English and of Muhammad Ali, Nawab of the Carnatic. Under cover of an affected indifference he used to send Russel additional men from Pondicherry from time to time to strengthen his corps. There was another small force, known as the Swiss party, in the service of Basalat Jang, commanded by de Lallée who had served under Bussy. The corps consisted of three to four hundred men, belonging to different nationalities, the majority being French. Unlike Russel's corps, de Lallée's was not authorised by the French Government. At the beginning of Law's administration the party was commanded by Babel, commonly known as Zéphir. The latter had earned such military distinction that the English had asked the Pondicherry Government for his recall, to which Law had replied that Zéphir and his men were not under his orders. After the death of Zéphir the corps was commanded for a short while by Gardé, who was succeeded by de Lallée. As with Russel, Law kept up a secret correspondence with de Lallée also. The men belonging to his corps were paid and treated better than those under Russel, and there was also a greater measure of liberty and equality among them, which was the reason why more men at Pondicherry wanted to join de Lallée's corps in preference to Russel's. Law was doubtful about the extent to which France could derive any benefit from these two partisan armies in her hour of need, since there was little ground to believe that they could put effective pressure upon their masters to give full co-operation to the French. He next referred to the two partisan armies in the north in the service of the Mughal Emperor, one under Madec and the other under Sombre. Madec's force at the time was very weak in European element, only 120 men. Sombre's force was much larger, but he was concerned only about his own advancement and could not be induced to take any risks for serving France. There was another partisan leader named Rouveau in the service of the ruler of Kalpi. He had originally belonged to Law's corps in the service of Prince Ali Gauhar and had later served under Zéphir, Gardé and de Lallée. There was lastly a small French force under Lanois in the service of the Raja of Travancore. Although the French Government had declared a general amnesty to all deserters who had taken service under Indian Princes, Law entertained the gravest doubt about how much it would succeed in making them quit their existing positions and rejoin the service of their nation.

The next *mémoire* of Law that we may notice is the *Refléxions sur la Proposition de faire passer 4,000 hommes à Delhi et sur la Province de Tatta,* dated 4th June 1777[1]. In it he discussed the practicability of Chevalier's project,—an alliance with the Mughal Emperor, despatch of 4,000 French troops to India, occupation of the province of Tatta and a joint attack on Bengal. He started by showing the impossibility of sending 4,000 troops to Delhi with the ultimate intention of delivering a joint attack on Bengal without a previous alliance with some of the great Powers of India which were in a condition to facilitate the march of the French army. There were two reasons for it: first, the march of a French army to Delhi would inevitably lead to a war with the English; and second, the appearance of 4,000 French troops to support the Emperor would at once unite all the vassals against him for fear of an attempt to restore the old Imperial authority over them. There might be some who would argue that even if the attack on Bengal did not materialise, the alliance with the Emperor and the despatch of 4,000 troops to India would at least enable the French to acquire the province of Tatta, which from the commercial point of view would compensate them for their losses in other parts of India. But that was a wholly wrong impression, since Tatta did not produce any article which could be exported to Europe.

Law then declared that for success in the enterprise against Bengal the essential pre-requisite was an alliance with the Marathas, the most warlike nation in India and having the most extensive dominions. With their help the French could easily land troops on the Orissa Coast and attack Bengal either from the south or from the north-west. Even if it was necessary to send a body of troops to Delhi, the best and the shortest routes were those which passed through Maratha territories from the Malabar Coast. In any case, without an alliance with the Marathas the French could do nothing. The despatch of troops to Delhi without any reference to them would at once set them against the French and even throw them into the arms of the English.

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[1] Martineau—*Etat Politique de l'Inde en 1777 par Law de Lauriston.*

Lastly, Law declared that the confident expectation of an easy success against the English entertained by Chevalier was entirely baseless and that the French must be prepared for a stiff resistance. Chevalier had under-estimated the military strength of the English, who had in fact 10,000 European troops and 60,000 sepoys well-trained and disciplined. He had besides overlooked that an attack on Bengal would automatically lead to hostilities on the Malabar and Coromandel Coasts, where the French must have sufficient forces to oppose the English. Thus, as Law concluded, if an attempt was to be made against the English, "It is necessary to employ large resources; small means will never be sufficient."

There is another *mémoire* of the same date, 4th June 1777, *Supplément aux observations sur l'état actuel de l'Inde.*[1] The object of this *mémoire* was to specify the demands which the French could make upon the English for territorial and commercial concessions in India if the latter wanted to avoid a war. Law stated that his previous *mémoires* had amply demonstrated that the French could not expect to re-establish their position in India on a satisfactory footing except by employing military measures on a large scale or by impressing upon the English that they were in a position to do so. From the beginning of his administration he had made repeated representations to the Minister for the adoption of vigorous measures in India, but it was not till the appointment of Bellecombe that the French Government began to pay serious attention to the matter. Law stated "many *mémoires* and observations have been submitted on India which may be of help in planning a line of action if it is a question of open war." But he believed that even without going to the extremity of open hostility the French could improve their situation in India considerably by negotiation, if they were in a position to threaten the English with immediate and large-scale war. The English could not welcome a war in India since they stood to lose more, and in order to avert hostilities they would be willing to make some concessions to the French. Negotiations for that purpose must be carried on in Europe, and not in India, by the Ministers of the two countries, and a representative of the English East India Company must also be associated in order to prevent the employees of the Company in India from creating difficulties in the implementation of the treaty, as they had done on many occasions in the past.

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[1] P. A. ms. 255; also published by Martineau in *Etat Politique de l'Inde.*

As regards the demands to be made, Law classified them into two categories, general and local. In the first category he included the restitution of all the old rights and privileges granted to the French by the *Farmans* and *Parawanas* of the Mughal Emperor and Provincial Governors, the right to establish trading stations anywhere in India and to export and import commodities without any restriction, the validity of French *Dastaks* or commercial passports, and freedom of navigation in all the rivers. In the second category were included, so far as Bengal was concerned, freedom of navigation in the Ganges, freedom of export and import, freedom of trade in salt, opium and saltpetre, cession of a territory adjoining Chandernagore and yielding a revenue of two lakhs of rupees, and right to maintain 200 European troops, 1,000 sepoys and 50 artillerymen with 40 pieces of cannon and to construct a canal round the town, the previous one completed in 1768 having been destroyed by the English. As regards the Orissa Coast, the French were to ask for complete liberty of trade at Yanam with some territorial concessions, exchange of their settlement at Masulipatam for a new one to be established at Motupalli or elsewhere, and restitution of the old settlement at Ganjam. On the Coromandel Coast the French were to demand the abolition of the customs houses at Pondicherry belonging to the Nawab of the Carnatic, the cession of a territory yielding a revenue of eight to nine lakhs of rupees a year and stretching along the coast from the river Markam or Allamparve in the north to Porto Novo in the south, that port inclusive, with a breadth of ten to fifteen leagues. Cuddalore would be included in that area, bringing an additional revenue of one lakh of rupees. At Karikal the French were to ask for the four Parganas which they formerly possessed, yielding an annual revenue of one lakh of rupees, together with complete freedom of navigation in the river. On the western coast the French were to ask for liberty of trade at Surat and strict orders to the English authorities at Tellicherry not to do anything which might injure the interests of the French at Mahé.

We may next notice another interesting document, *Demandes et Questions faites à M. Law par M. de Bellecombe et Reponses de M. Law.*[1] It contains Law's replies to a number of questions put to him by his successor in office, Bellecombe, regarding the administration and commerce of the French settlements in India and relations with the country Powers. One would get here a precise summary of Law's views about the existing condition of the French and the means by which it could be improved, which had already been expressed in numerous *mémories* and letters. In reply to one of the questions of Bellecombe about the Powers allied to the French, Law stated that there was no formal alliance with any country Power in view of the orders of the Government prohibiting any interference in the internal quarrels of the Indian Princes or in a dispute between an Indian Prince and a European Power. Moreover, the political situation in India was so quickly shifting that it would serve little practical use to conclude a formal alliance long in advance, since the engagements contracted might be disowned when the occasion came. During the period of his administration Law had tried to cultivate friendly relations with the important country Powers, including the Mughal Emperor. They were all interested in a common objective, the destruction of the English power in India, but subordinated the collective interest to their mutual rivalries and jealousies. In the absence of a general combination of all the Powers, which was extremely difficult to achieve, the French must content themselves with forming alliances with some of them. Negotiations were already in progress with the Mughal Emperor, Haidar Ali and the Marathas, and talks could also be started with Nizam Ali and Basalat Jang. About the advantages and difficulties of such negotiations Law referred Bellecombe to his *Observations sur l'état politique de l'Inde.*

In reply to another question of Bellecombe Law gave full particulars about the agents, official and non-official, maintained by the Pondicherry Government at the Courts of the different Indian Princes as also in the various European settlements. At the Court of Haidar Ali there was a permanent *Wakil,* a Brahmin named Krishna. The official representation was required both in the interest of the settlement at Mahé as well as in that of the French corps under Russel. The *Wakil* was honest, intelligent and loyal and was paid Rs. 100 per month. There was no paid official agent at the Courts of Nizam Ali, and Basalat Jang, but Law had kept up a regular correspondence with de Lallée, who commanded the Swiss party in the service of Basalat Jang and was loyal to France. At the Court of Muhammad Ali there was an official *Wakil* named Venkata Rao, who passed on every information of interest to the French. He was paid Rs. 60 per month. Occasionally Law used to send Beylié, a member of the Pondicherry Council, to get full details about any interesting development. He also made use of two servants of Muhammad Ali, Shiva Rao, who for many years was paid an allowance of Rs. 30 per month, and Khoja Hassan Khan, who was remunerated with annual presents. Both of them were useful agents for getting all the secrets of Muhammad Ali's Court. Before the capture of Tanjore by Muhammad Ali in 1773, the Raja used to maintain a *Wakil* at Pondicherry whom the French also paid Rs. 45 per month. But the practice was not resumed after the restoration of the Raja, and French relations with Tanjore were conducted through the Commandant of Karikal. The only European agent employed was de Montvert, whom Law had permitted Chevalier to send to the Court of Delhi to conclude negotiations about the proposal of an alliance made by the Emperor. There was no regular paid agent at the Maratha Court at Poona, but there were two persons of great use to the French. One was Raza Ali, son of Chanda Sahib, their old ally, who had a close relative at Pondicherry named Mir Mahmud Raza; and the other was Dada Rao, who was in the service of Muhammad Ali and a brother of Shiva Rao. These two brothers were the sons of Naga Rao, who had been employed by Bussy on political missions. Naga Rao had died eight or nine years back in the service of Muhammad Ali. Law had intended to enter into negotiations with the Maratha Court through the channel of the two brothers, who were closely allied with Khoja Hassan Khan, and he had been waiting only for the formal orders of the Minister. The French had no regular agent at the various European settlements. It would have been useful no doubt, but lack of funds stood in the way. However, the *Diwan* of Pondicherry used to carry on correspondence with persons at Madras under the pretext of commerce and could get in that way much valuable information. Frequently sepoys in disguise were also utilised for the purpose, and Law recommended that his successor should try to find out men from the sepoys having talents for secret service.

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[1] P. A. ms. 236. The questions put by Bellecombe are dated 9th January 1777 and Law's replies are dated 31st March.

Lastly, we may notice Law's *Mémoire Militaire sur L' Inde*[1] written in 1780, when two years after the outbreak of war the French Government was seriously contemplating for the first time the despatch of a strong expeditionary force to India. It was one of the many military *mémoires* submitted to the Government at the request of the Minister of Marine and Colonies, who sought the opinion of persons having a detailed knowledge of Indian politics. The plan submitted by Law is interesting not only for its contents but also for the difference between its recommendations and the actual organisation and plan of operations of the expeditionary force sent to India shortly after. Law began his *mémoire* by stressing the immediate need of sending a strong expeditionary force to India in place of the existing policy of the French Government to concentrate entirely on the European and American theatres. There were two reasons; first, if England retained her position of supremacy in India it would give her an undue dominance in the European political system, and second, England could never be defeated in Europe unless the steady flow of wealth from India could be stopped by a direct attack on her position there.

Law next dealt with the four points of attack against the English and the prospect of gaining allies among the country Powers. He stated that although in his *mémoire* of 1767 he had expressed his preference for Bengal, and failing that the Coromandel Coast, as the first theatre of operations against the English, things had changed greatly since then, making it extremely difficult for the French to deliver their first attack in either of the two regions. Under the circumstances the first attack could be delivered either on the Orissa or on the Malabar Coast, of which the second was decidedly preferable. Law then discussed the advantages offered by the two regions. "The English not being in a strong position on the Orissa Coast, we can easily land there at several points and ally ourselves with the various Rajas who want nothing better than to throw off the yoke of the English. It is even possible, with the help of Nizam Ali, Viceroy of the Deccan, to whom really belong the four Sarkars, to seize the English possessions round Masulipatam and to lay siege to the place .... Vizagapatam may be captured without much trouble, thus cutting off the English communication between Bengal and the Coromandel Coast, specially if our naval squadron can defeat that of the enemy and achieve supremacy on the sea."

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[1] P. A. ms. 321.

Law continued: "The safest theatre to begin our operations is undoubtedly the Malabar Coast, where we may have on our side both the Marathas and Hyder Ali Khan who have been at war with the English for a long time. It is Bombay itself which should be attacked at the earliest possible moment or when the English least expect it. That place being captured, we shall have an excellent port for our vessels. Surat will fall automatically, and by the treaty which we shall be able to conclude with the Marathas and Hyder Ali Khan whose various ports will be open to us, all the small English settlements along the coast will be ours, and we shall thus open out for ourselves routes both to Delhi and to the Carnatic." While expressing his preference for the Malabar Coast as the first point of attack, Law, however, observed that the principal objective of the French should always be Bengal, and all the earlier operations were to be regarded as merely preliminary steps to an attack on that province. Bengal was the source of the English power in India, and with its conquest English resistance in other parts of India would end automatically. If it were possible to attack Bengal first, Law would have advised that course, but since it would take a long time to collect all the resources necessary for such an enterprise, arms, men and allies, he advised the beginning of operations on the Malabar Coast as the first preliminary move.

On the Malabar Coast the French should try to gain the alliance of both the Marathas and Haidar Ali. It was no doubt a difficult task because of the intense jealousy and suspicion between the two, but Law believed that "by means of skilfully conducted negotiations we shall succeed in conciliating the interests of Hyder Ali Khan with those of the Marathas, in uniting them by exposing all the wickedness of the English policy, and in engaging them to work in concert with us in order to reduce the power of that nation". If the French secured the alliance of both, they could also expect to win over Nizam Ali to their side by promising the restitution of the Carnatic and the four Sarkars. If, however, the French had to choose between the Marathas and Haidar Ali, preference should be given to the former. "If we are with the Marathas, even without Hyder Ali Khan, Nizam Ali will still be with us; but if we have only Hyder Ali on our side and the Marathas against, Nizam Ali will also probably be against us, because the increasing power of Hyder Ali Khan disturbs him greatly."

Law next referred to the forces required by the French for the Indian enterprise. The English had in India 8 ships of the line and 20 frigates, and their land forces consisted of about 10,000 Europeans and 60,000 sepoys. Against such a formidable enemy the French must have an army very strong in European element, since they would be lacking in the sepoy element which would take a long time to raise and train up. Law estimated that the French would require a naval force of 12 ships of the line and an equal number of frigates and a land force of 12,000 Europeans and 2,000 African troops. A further reinforcement of 3,000 Europeans should also be kept ready in the Isle of France. Law then discussed at length the time and plan of operations. He wanted to take the English by surprise and capture Bombay at a time when their fleet would be absent from the western coast during the interval between two monsoons. He therefore advised that the expedition should start from France in December 1780, reaching the Cape of Good Hope in April 1781. From there the Supreme Commander was to send instructions to the Isle of France to despatch all available troops and ships to the Bay of St. Augustin in the island of Madagascar according to a prearranged plan. Then the fleet was to start from the Cape at the beginning of June 1781 and after being joined by the reinforcements at Madagascar, without stopping at the Isle of France, was to reach the Malabar Coast about the middle of August when the weather would begin to improve. Bombay could then be easily surprised and captured, particularly as the English fleet would be away from the western coast at the time, and nobody could expect that a French expeditionary force could come straight to India without stopping at the Isle of France for some time. The success of the enterprise, however, depended on the maintenance of complete secrecy. After capturing Bombay by surprise, the French should take the earliest opportunity to meet and destroy the English fleet, which would facilitate their further operations against Bengal and the Coromandel Coast. The first task of the Supreme Commander, after taking Bombay, was to gain the alliance of the Marathas, Haidar Ali and Nizam Ali, which would enable the French to attack the Carnatic and the English possessions on the Orissa Coast. At the same time in order to facilitate the invasion of Bengal, the principal object of the French enterprise, negotiations must be started with the Mughal Emperor, the Nawab of Oudh, the Nagpur branch of the Marathas, and the influential *Seths* or bankers of Bengal. The actual time of the expedition to Bengal, either before or after the reduction of the English settlements on the Coromandel Coast, should be left to the discretion of the Supreme Commander. To assure success, Bengal must be attacked simultaneously from three sides, north, west and south, in co-operation with the Indian allies.

Such was the plan of military operations put forward by Law. We shall notice later the comments of Bellecombe, who did not share the optimism of Law, but agreed with him on two points,—first, that the French must have naval superiority in Indian waters, and second that Bombay must be captured before beginning operations elsewhere. Here it will be interesting to note how the organisation and plan of operations of the expeditionary force under Bussy differed from the scheme submitted by Law. In the first place, Law wanted the expeditionary force to reach India by August 1781, which would have given the French much longer time for military operations. As it was, the first instalment of the French force reached India in March 1782 and the rest in March 1783, just before the news of the armistice stopped all hostilities. In the second place, Law envisaged an expedition on a much larger scale than actually sent under Bussy. The French squadron under de Suffren was considerably weaker and the land force was only a quarter of what was proposed by Law. In the third place, Law recommended the operations to begin on the Malabar Coast, with the first blow being struck against Bombay, whereas the French in 1782-83 frittered away their efforts on the Coromandel Coast and no attempt was made to land troops on the western coast. Finally, while Law attached greater importance to an alliance with the Marathas than with Haidar Ali, the French in 1782-83 clung to their connection with the Mysore ruler, while the proposals of the Marathas were treated with undue caution and mistrust.

BELLECOMBE

We turn next to the political views of Bellecombe who succeeded Law as Governor of Pondicherry in January 1777. The first *mémoire* of Bellecombe that we may notice is a report on the political situation in India, dated 24th January 1778.[1] It was his first general report to the Minister of Marine and Colonies since his assumption of office at Pondicherry. Bellecombe first dealt with the political situation in north India. He wrote that from the reports received from Chevalier in Bengal it appeared that the position of the Mughal Emperor had improved considerably mainly due to the courage and ability of his general, Najaf Khan, an extraordinary man, as skilful in war as astute in diplomacy. He had a well-trained army including European partisan forces, and his earlier successes held out reasonable hopes for further expansion and consolidation of the Imperial authority. Bellecombe had also been informed that Asaf-ud-daulah, the Nawab of Oudh, was tired of English control, but he doubted whether the Nawab would have the courage to throw off the yoke of the English and ally himself with the Emperor. Another important power in the north was Raja of Gohad who was constantly extending his dominion and had a cavalry of nearly fifty thousand. He had also purchased the remnant of Madec's force under the command of Visage. He was pro-French in sympathy and was in close alliance with Najaf Khan.

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[1] P. A. ms. 289.

Bellecombe next referred to the internal dissensions among the Marathas, which were being fully exploited by the English. Although the latter had concluded peace in 1776, they were making fresh preparations for war, either to renew hostilities against the Marathas or in anticipation of a war with the French. Even in the latter case they were sure to attempt a change of Government at Poona in order to be free from any possible danger from that quarter. It might not be very difficult for them, since besides the alliance with Raghoba they were in communication with the Maratha ruler of Nagpur as well as with Sindhia. Writing about Haidar, Bellecombe stated that he was steadily improving his position, partly by military strength and partly by diplomacy. He had recently succeeded in breaking up the formidable coalition formed against him by the Marathas, Nizam Ali and Basalat Jang, and having detached the last two had inflicted a crushing defeat on the first. Bellecombe believed that the English would try to exploit the enmity between the Marathas and Haidar Ali. If the attention of the Marathas could be diverted to an attack on Haidar's territory and their forces kept occupied far off from Poona, the English could make a surprise move and capture the Maratha capital. By drawing the Marathas of Nagpur to their side they would be able to keep in check Nizam Ali and Basalat Jang.

With regard to the Coromandel Coast, Bellecombe had received information that Madras was full of rumours about the imminence of a war with France. Military officers on leave were being recalled, new sepoys recruited and provisions hastily stored. The rumours had also reached the Orissa Coast. Some of the petty Rajas in the Northern Sarkars had written to Bellecombe and even sent *Wakils* to him, pledging their support to the French in case of a war with the English. About the situation in Bengal, Bellecombe had received letters from Chevalier that the English, apprehending an imminent outbreak of war with France, were recalling all their troops from the north-western frontier. The withdrawal of English troops would make it easier for the Emperor and Najaf Khan to free

Oudh from English domination, specially if Asaf-ud-daulah joined them, and even to invade Bengal. But by themselves Indian Powers would never be able to defeat the English. A successful invasion of Bengal required a three-pronged attack by the Imperial forces, the Marathas of Berar and the French. While Najaf Khan led an invading army from the north, a combined Franco-Maratha force was to penetrate through the west, while the principal French force was to move up the Ganges and attack from the south. The English were not unaware of such a danger, and in order to draw the Marathas of Berar to their side they had sent an agent for negotiation. On the French side too, Chevalier had been authorised to send a *Wakil* to counteract the persuasions of the English. Bellecombe had also authorised Chevalier to send a *Wakil* to the Emperor at Delhi, but, he observed with regret, it was useless to negotiate unless the French could show that they had adequate military forces to fulfil their engagements. Under the existing circumstances "the treaties that we may wish to conclude with the Powers will only serve to make them realise more and more how little they could count on us. One may prepare the ground, it is true, ... but what is the use of concluding a treaty without being assured of the power of fulfilling it?".

There is another *mémoire* of Bellecombe of the same date, 24th January 1778, *Observations sur les Cipayes.*[1] In it he stressed the importance of a sepoy force in a war with the English and the necessity of recruiting men long in advance of the outbreak of hostilities. The second point of interest of the *mémoire* is that Bellecombe here gave his views as to whether the French should choose the Marathas or Haidar Ali if both of them could not be brought together into a coalition against the English. The third point of interest is that the *mémoire* contained a scathing criticism of Saint-Lubin, which was also a condemnation of the policy of the Minister of Marine and Colonies. Such outspoken comments from a Governor of Pondicherry are astonishing indeed.

The *mémoire* began with a warning that in a plan of military operations in India that might be drawn up in France there was a great risk of neglecting a vital point through ignorance, namely, the necessity of raising a large body of sepoy troops, to be trained and disciplined in the European fashion, long in advance of the outbreak of war. Bellecombe stated that the necessity of having a large sepoy force arose simply from the fact that it would never be possible for the French to bring from Europe sufficient troops to be able to face the overwhelming number of the English forces in India, which included about sixty thousand sepoys, besides those in the service of vassal Princes like Asaf-ud-daulah and Muhammad Ali. People in France had no idea about the efficiency and fighting quality of the Indian sepoys, but in truth "if the English win, it will be by the number and the valour of their sepoys." Moreover, if the French had only European troops for their operations in India, it would be extremely difficult to make good any losses in their number. Bringing fresh troops from Europe would involve huge expense and waste of time, leaving aside the risk of transport. Thus the loss of 20 European soldiers would be of much greater concern to the French than that of 500 sepoys to the English.

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[1] P. A. ms. 290.

Bellecombe then dealt with the second wrong impression in France that any number of sepoy troops could be raised in India within a month of the outbreak of war. He pointed out that the fate of the French operations in India would depend largely on the result of the first encounter. At the very start, therefore, the French must have an adequate force to oppose the enemy. That necessitated the raising of a sepoy force well in advance of the declaration of war, since it took a long time to get the right type of recruits and to train and discipline them in the European fashion. Bellecombe then suggested that immediate orders should be sent by the Minister to increase the existing sepoy force of 500 to at least 2,000. The force was to be organised in four Battalions of 500 each, or better eight Battalions of 250, with an adequate number of European officers. The number of sepoys could then be quadrupled in a short while, as the new recruits in each Company would be quick to learn from the old ones and there would be no sudden demand for European officers.

Bellecombe next discussed the difficulty of uniting Haidar Ali and the Marathas in an anti-English coalition and the consequent necessity of having to choose one of the two for an alliance. His opinion was that under the existing circumstances an alliance with Haidar Ali should be preferred. He gave two reasons for his choice. First, Haidar Ali's troops were better trained and disciplined and therefore more dependable in action than those of the Marathas; and second, an alliance with Haidar would at least create less difficulties for the French than an alliance with the Marathas. If the French chose Haidar, the Marathas would at least remain neutral and not join the English, since there were numerous causes of dispute between them. On the other hand, if the French allied themselves with the Marathas, there was every possibility of Haidar openly joining the English out of jealousy for the Marathas and fear of an increase in their power. It was not in the least difficult for Haidar to join the English, since for many years he had no cause of complaint against them, had even received valuable services from them and was therefore anxious to retain their friendship. Considering the matter from the opposite point of view, Bellecombe raised the question that if the French were to have one of the two Powers as their enemy, which one should they choose? He himself thought that in the existing state of affairs the enmity of Haidar Ali was more to be dreaded than that of the Marathas. It was not so five or six years earlier. Haidar Ali was then in a sorry state, while the Marathas stood as the leading Power in India. But since the outbreak of internal dissensions, the Maratha power had rapidly declined, while Haidar Ali was getting stronger every day. Another thing to be considered was that the French did not have to fear the enmity of the entire Maratha nation. The Marathas were so much divided among themselves that if the English secured the alliance of one party, the other party was sure to join the French.

The third subject dealt with in the *mémoire* was Saint-Lubin's mission to Poona. Bellecombe passed severe strictures on Saint-Lubin's character and competence, calling him "an adept in intrigue and falsehood", who had successfully "exploited the credulity of the French nation" since his return from India in 1770. Bellecombe knew his antecedents too well. He had entered the service of Haidar Ali in 1766, and had not only deserted him in 1767 on the outbreak of war with the English, but had even taken up his residence at Madras, where his activities were shady in character. On his return to France in 1770, he explained that he had gone to Madras to play upon the English and ruin them by intrigues and internal dissensions. He imposed upon the credulity of the French Government and the public with so much success that he was granted a considerable pension and was regarded as the only person capable of creating a revolution in India. Bellecombe then bitterly observed, "Today it is really our nation and the King's Minister that he is playing upon; I give him that credit without however meaning to do so." Saint-Lubin was given access to the official records at Versailles, and like a clever man he utilised all the *mémoires* on India down to 1772. These *mémoires* mostly recommended an alliance with the Marathas in preference to that with Haidar Ali; but, as Bellecombe pointed out, Saint-Lubin was completely ignorant of the change that had come over since 1772 in the relative positions of the two Powers. Finally, Saint-Lubin submitted a *mémoire* of his own to the Minister. It was well received, because of the style of writing and of the omission of the difficulties to be encountered in its execution. Unfortunately for the French, although the political situation in India had changed completely by 1776 and the Minister had been informed about all the developments, he ultimately accepted the plan of Saint-Lubin and decided to send him out to India to execute it.

Bellecombe had information that the Poona Government had considerable misgivings about the bonafides of Saint-Lubin. It was not in the least surprising, since the Marathas were not "unaware of the tricks of Saint-Lubin while he was with the Nabab Haidar Ali Khan and of his precipitate flight from his camp to go and serve the English". The essential point for the success of a mission like that of Saint-Lubin was not only to unite the different Maratha Chiefs subject to the Government of Poona but also to bring about a solid understanding among the Marathas of Poona, those of Berar, and Haidar Ali. But to work for such a coalition "it required another man than Saint-Lubin . . . . .. to 'be guided in his operations by the *Commandant-Général* of the nation, without whose intervention the country Powers cannot give their confidence to any person whatsoever, specially to a person like Saint-Lubin known to be an adventurer, on whose word or good faith no one can rely".

The third *mémoire* of Bellecombe that we may notice is the *Refléxions sur le mémoire de M. Law,* dated 1781.[1] It was written as a comment on Law's *Mémoire Militaire sur L'Inde* of 1780. In his *mémoire* Law had submitted two plans of military operations in India, one on a larger scale, requiring 12 men-of-war, 12 frigates, and 12,000 European troops; and another on a smaller scale, which was in essence the Tatta project of Chevalier. Bellecombe wholly rejected the second plan, as diverting the attention of the French from what should be their real objective. "Our real interest is to establish ourselves solidly in India. The English have forced us out, and the honour of the nation requires our re-entry at least on a footing of equality with them and taking revenge for all the outrages they have committed. What would people think of us if they see us attempt to usurp the country of an Indian Prince in place of recovering the territory taken from us and of driving the English out of their own establishments? Would it not be a dishonourable confession of our own impotence?" As regards the larger plan, Bellecombe preferred it without sharing the unreserved optimism of Law. He was of opinion that military successes in India would be of no avail unless the French were equally successful in Europe and America. "The means demanded by Law, supposing that the Government can employ them, would never suffice to drive the English out of India . . . . . if we do not have in other parts of the world an absolute superiority over that Power". If victory favoured the English in Europe and America, they could gain back their Indian possessions by the treaty of peace. Thus Bellecombe agreed to the despatch of a large expeditionary force to India only if the military situation in Europe and America permitted.

For success in the Indian enterprise the beginning was most important, and Bellecombe therefore recommended that the first attack should be delivered with forces superior to those of the English. The destruction of the enemy fleet was an essential preliminary, which would enable the French to move their troops to any point they liked. Bellecombe agreed with Law that the first attack should be delivered on Bombay, the possession of which would give the French a safe shelter for their ships in all seasons and a secure base for their future operations. As regards the strength of the expeditionary force, Bellecombe thought that it should start with 12 ships and 8,000 European troops. Such a force would not cost France much additional expense. She had already to maintain a considerable number of troops and ships in the Isle of France for fear of an attack by the English. But the best defence for the Isle of France was to carry the war to the centre of the English possessions in India. Thus all the troops, vessels and money employed for the defence of the Isle of France could be diverted to the Indian expedition. The 3,000 troops maintained in that island, added to the 4,000 to be sent from France and the Regiment of Pondicherry, would make the total of 8,000 required for the Indian expedition; and the major portion of the twelve to fifteen million livres spent in the island could be utilised for the same purpose.

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[1] P. A. ms. 323.

CHAPTER VII

DIPLOMATIC PROJECTS: SAINT-LUBIN, MONTIGNY AND OTHERS

In the present chapter we shall notice the diplomatic projects and activities of two agents sent to India by the Minister of Marine and Colonies on the eve of the outbreak of war between France and England in 1778. The efforts of both the agents, Saint-Lubin and Montigny, were concentrated principally on forming an alliance with the Maratha Confederacy, and although they did not bear fruit they are of deep interest, as showing the trend of French policy in India during the War of American Independence and the reactions it produced on the southern Powers and the English. Besides the work of these two semi-official agents, we shall also notice a few anonymous *mémoires,* which will complete our review of French diplomatic projects between 1765 and 1783.

SAINT-LUBIN

The French diplomatic agent who gained the greatest notoriety in the eyes of the English, even more than Chevalier, was Pallebot de Saint-Lubin, whose mission to Poona was viewed with great alarm by the Governments of Bombay and Calcutta. The extent of their panic is best illustrated by the large mass of documents relating to Saint-Lubin's activities preserved in the Bombay Archives and published by Forrest in his *Selections from Letters, Despatches etc., Bombay Secretariat, Maratha Series.* It is rather surprising that the English, who were so much alarmed at Saint-Lubin's activities, felt little concern about Montigny, who remained at Poona for a longer period and whose diplomatic net was cast wider. It is all the more surprising, because Saint-Lubin was after all an impostor and could not have done any material damage to English interests in India. With the exception of Comte de Modave, who expressed a high opinion about Saint-Lubin, all the other contemporary Frenchmen in India, including

Bellecombe, Governor of Pondicherry, considered him as a mere unprincipled adventurer, who had for a time successfully imposed on the credulity of the Minister of Marine and Colonies, de Sartine. No one thought of him as anything but a successful knave, or attached the slightest importance to his negotiations with the Maratha Government. Bellecombe made a violent and sarcastic attack on him in a *mémoire* dated 24th January 1778, noticed already, even though he knew that Saint-Lubin enjoyed the favour of the Minister and had been sent out to India by him. The contemporary estimate of Saint-Lubin's character is fully borne out by his own letters and narratives, preserved in the Archives of the French Colonial Ministry, dealing with his exploits in India at different times, which in ridiculous self-exaltation surpass anything that may be conceived. It is true that most of the French adventurers in India in the second half of the 18th century were not remarkable for their integrity and moderation. Most of them were prone to exaggerate things, either out of self-interest or prompted by an undue zeal for the national cause. But none of them distorted facts and gave out utterly false stories in the same manner as Saint-Lubin.

Although we are not concerned with the details of the early career of Saint-Lubin, a brief notice is nevertheless necessary for a proper appreciation of the man. Saint-Lubin first came to India as a medical assistant attached to the regiment of Lally. According to his own version, he devoted himself to the study of Indian languages in order to prepare himself for a diplomatic career, and in 1759 he was sent by Lally on a secret mission to Bengal. It is not known what exactly he did there, but in a letter written to the Minister, de Sartine, much later he claimed to have seized the plans of the fortifications of Calcutta and, what was a rather amazing exploit, to have kidnapped the engineer, causing a long delay in the construction of the fort. In 1763 we find him back in Paris, frequenting the ante-chambers of the Minister and the Company's offices. He succeeded in gaining the confidence of the authorities in France, and with official encouragement he returned to India in 1766 and entered the service of Haidar Ali. We do not know his exact position there, nor can we attach any importance to the claim he made in a letter to de Sartine in 1775 that he was appointed "Chief Engineer, Commander of the artillery and General of the six thousand sepoys constituting the Nawab's guard". He made equally fantastic claims about his exploits while in the service of Haidar Ali, taking a leading part in numerous battles, capturing towns and forts almost single-handed, repulsing myriads of Maratha cavalry and initiating a plan of a general confederacy of Indian Powers against the English. These exploits were however not known to anybody but himself. What is known is that he suddenly left Haidar Ali on the outbreak of war with the English and, curiously enough, took up his residence at Madras. The insinuation of Bellecombe may not be unfounded that, being an unprincipled opportunist, Saint-Lubin deserted his patron and offered his services to his enemy. Saint-Lubin however explained that his object was to help Haidar Ali by sowing dissension among the English at Madras. Anyway, after some time he suddenly vanished from the Indian scene and re-appeared in Paris in 1770.

Back in France, Saint-Lubin renewed his intrigues, always styling himself as the "ex-general of Haidar Ali" and giving out pretentious stories about his initimate connection with the Maratha Raja. His tenacity and persuasive skill gained for him the confidence of the Minister, de Sartine, a few years later. The time was opportune for him. With the outbreak of the War of American Independence France began to stir herself from the lethargy which had seized her during the later days of Louis XV, and for the first time the Government began to pay serious consideration to the numerous *mémoires* and projects submitted since 1765 for the re-establishment of French influence in India. Having wormed his way into the confidence of the Minister, Saint-Lubin gained access to these secret papers and utilised them to prepare a scheme of his own. The basis of his scheme was an alliance with the Marathas. France was to send a body of troops to the assistance of the Poona Government, and in return she was to secure a port on the western coast, preferably Chaul. complete freedom of trade in the Maratha dominions and assurance of Maratha protection of her settlements in India against English attacks. In his scheme Saint-Lubin took good care to secure his own advancement, and suggested that for its implementation he himself should be sent out as the accredited representative of the French

Government, with full control over the negotiations with the Poona Government. He succeeded in his efforts to such an extent that he secured his appointment as a special diplomatic agent to the Court of Poona, quite independent of the control of the Pondicherry authorities; and although he was not accorded full official status, to prove his bonafide he was given a letter from Louis XVI addressed to the Peshwa and another from the Minister, de Sartine, addressed to Nana Phadnavis.

It cannot be definitely ascertained whether in sending Saint-Lubin on a special diplomatic mission the French Government was influenced by some earlier overtures from Poona. James Madjett, a disgruntled member of Saint-Lubin's entourage, writing to William Lewis, the English agent at Poona, in November 1777 stated, "Some overtures transmitted to the Court of France from India had first given rise to the step taken relative to an alliance with the Marathas".[1] It was perhaps not improbable, since Law also in his *mémoires* referred several times to the overtures made by the Marathas in 1772. Madjett also gave some interesting details about the origin of Saint-Lubin's mission in his evidence to Mostyn, the English representative at Poona, in May 1777.[2] According to him it was the *mémoires* of Bussy which inspired Saint-Lubin and Dumas (for some time Governor of the Isle of France) to work out a plan of Franco-Maratha alliance, which received the approval of the Minister of Marine and Colonies. The original plan was that the two were to start together from France with 2,500 men, to be reinforced by 500 more from the Isle of France. But in the end Saint-Lubin, who was jealous of Dumas and wanted to have full control of affairs for himself, represented to de Sartine that before despatching troops to India he should be sent out first to study the political situation and to come to an agreement with the Maratha Government. The proposal was accepted and thus Saint-Lubin started alone for India.

In order to keep his mission a close secret Saint-Lubin travelled in a private capacity. He successfully duped a

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[1] Forrest—*Selections from Letters, Despatches, etc. Bombay Secretariat, Maratha Series*, pp. 291-296.

[2] *Ibid*, pp. 290-291.

Bordeaux merchant named Laffonde, who was induced to freight a boat and equip it with merchandise for India and China in the hope of making a huge profit. Saint-Lubin christened the boat *Le Sartine* as a mark of flattery to the Minister. The merchandise taken at his suggestion consisted entirely of military stores, 15,000 muskets, all out of use, a small quantity of munitions, uniforms for troops and a large number of buttons with the queer design engraved on them of the French *fleur-de-lys* encircled by a crescent, which the inventive genius of Saint-Lubin considered appropriate for French soldiers serving as allies of the Marathas. Evidently the object of Sain-Lubin was to equip an army in India, while to Laffonde he held out an assurance that the goods could be sold at a high price to the Indian Princes.

The letter of James Madjett to William Lewis, dated November 9, 1777, gives certain details about Saint-Lubin's departure from France and his activities in India.[1] Saint-Lubin was accompanied by two Santy brothers, the elder of whom acted as his secretary, and one de Corcelle, a young man of high connections to whom he had held out assurances of a good career in India. He maintained a veil of secrecy over his departure from France, but arriving at Chaul on the 16th March 1777, he threw it off and openly assumed the airs of an Ambassador of the King of France. He insisted on a grand ceremonial reception by the Governor of the place, which was accorded to him. From Chaul he sent his secretary, de Santy, to Poona to announce his arrival and to arrange for his journey and reception at the Maratha capital. To keep up his prestige as the accredited representative of the King of France, he demanded for his reception a large number of elephants, horses, camels, palanquins etc., and although his demands were not met in full, the Maratha Government did make a grand show to receive him. As the English representative at Poona, Mostyn, wrote to the Governor and Select Committee of Bombay, "I cannot help here observing the difference of his reception and mine on this occasion . . . . . Indeed in every respect they paid the greatest attention to the French".[2]

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[1] Forrest—*Selections* . . . . . *Maratha Series,* pp. 291-296.

[2] *Ibid,* pp. 288-290 (letter dated May 19, 1777).

Saint-Lubin started from Chaul on the 11th April, and travelling by way of Poona he reached Purandhar, where the Peshwa and the Ministers were for the time being, early in May. He was, however, kept waiting for a few days before being granted an audience, and it was not till the 12th or 14th of May that he was introduced to the Peshwa and his ministers.[1] At the audience he presented as his credentials the letter of Louis XVI, addressed to the Peshwa, and that of de Sartine to Nana Phadnavis. The activities of Saint-Lubin after this formal affair are somewhat shrouded in mystery, and our principal source of evidence, namely Madjett, could not throw much light on them, as he left Saint-Lubin soon after. However, it appears that the French adventurer moved with the Maratha Court to Poona, where he had several secret conferences with Nana Phadnavis, resulting in the drawing up of a treaty of alliance. The terms of the treaty cannot be definitely ascertained, but it appears from the various sources available to us that the principal basis of the agreement was the despatch of a body of French troops to the assistance of the Maratha Government in exchange for the cession of the port of Chaul and the fort of Rewadanda, complete freedom of trade for the French throughout the Maratha empire, and protection of the French settlements in India against any attack.

In his letter to Lewis dated 9th November 1777, Madjett stated that although he had parted company with Saint-Lubin in May, he received information that towards the end of June Saint-Lubin sent a circular to all the Frenchmen residing at Poona to meet at the house of Nana Phadnavis to be witnesses to the taking of oaths by the two ministers relating to the treaty of perpetual alliance just concluded. He himself did not attend the ceremony, but he had "heard it repeatedly mentioned by different gentlemen who were there that there was some written instrument . . . . . I have never been able to learn the particulars of the agreement with Nana, but I have heard in general the basis of it was the sending out a body of troops to assist against the enemies of Nana". Madjett continued that about the beginning of August Saint-Lubin sent his secretary's brother, Pascoal de Santy, to Surat with a packet for de Sartine and instructed the French Consul at Surat, Briancourt, to send him to Europe as expeditiously as possible. Madjettt had also heard that Saint-Lubin sent very encouraging reports to France about the result of his negotiations with the Maratha Government. He then gave his general opinion about the character of Saint-Lubin and the bonafide of his diplomatic mission. "He is a man capable of insinuating himself into the esteem and confidence of most men, of deceiving, misleading and betraying them . . . . . but after the strictest scrutiny there has never yet been the least ground to doubt, that in consequence of overtures from hence, he has been sent out at least to examine the state of affairs here . . . . . How far this may be true I leave you to judge from the simple circumstances of Mons. Picot at Mahi and Mons. Briancourt at Surat having acknowledged him and answered his drafts. It is true that Mons. Bellecombe disowns him as Ambassador extraordinaire from the King of France, but still it seems he knew of his coming out. From the smallness of his appointment and no staff being sent out with him, it should seem that it was meant he should act as covertly as possible . . . . . but I believe he has been led into an ostentatious display here, ruinous perhaps to the purpose he has been sent for, the better to impose himself on this Government, as a person of great importance, in hopes of attracting such presents as would make him perfectly easy on the event of public affairs".

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[1] Letter from James Madjett to William Lewis, November 9, 1777 (*Forrest*, pp. 291-296). But Mostyn writing to the Governor and Select Committee of Bombay on May 19, 1777, stated that Saint-Lubin had his audience on the 8th May (*Forrest*, pp. 288-290). It should be noticed that Madjett was with Saint-Lubin at Purandhar and it was not till after the audience that he left him.

About the outcome of his negotiations with the Maratha Government, we may notice here a letter from Saint-Lubin himself, written from Poona on July 26, 1777 and addressed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Paris, one of his patrons in the Government. "Monseigneur, kindly accept the homage I am offering you of my first success in the career open to my zeal and activity. The mission to the Maratha Court with which His Majesty has honoured me has been fulfilled and all my hopes in this regard have been achieved. The treaty of alliance and commerce between the two Crowns has been signed and solemnised by oaths. The alliance has placed our establishments under the protection of the foremost power of Hindusthan. The freedom of commerce, extended to our merchants through the whole extent of the Maratha dominion, is sheltered from the molestations from which they suffer in the rest of India; and the Maratha ports, open to our vessels in all seasons, assure them all the resources that can be expected from a warlike, maritime and commercial people who have made common cause with us . . . . .".[1] But although the letter speaks of only commercial advantages, from the English records it seems that there was at least a tacit, if not a formal, agreement about the cession of the port of Chaul and the fort of Rewadanda in return for the despatch of a body of French troops to the assistance of the Maratha Government. Indeed, it was not so much the commercial advantages as the political and military terms of the agreement which threw the English into a panic and induced them, more than anything else, to intervene in Maratha politics and overthrow the regime which was favourable to the French alliance.

As to the military terms of the agreement, some light is thrown by the intercepted letters of Saint-Lubin addressed to the Portuguese Governors of Goa and Daman.[2] It cannot be really ascertained whether the French Government had ever any intention of sending troops to India merely in response to the requests of Saint-Lubin, but the fact that the latter wrote to the Portuguese Governors to allow French troops to pass through their territories to the Maratha dominion suggests that Saint-Lubin had, either falsely or with some official encouragement from Paris, held out an assurance of French military assistance to the Maratha Government. Whether that military help was intended merely to bolster up the authority of Nana Phadnavis as against his former associates in the Government, who had broken away from him in March 1778, or for the general purpose of strengthening the resistance of the Marathas against English aggression, it is not relevant to discuss for our present purpose. What matters here is that Saint-Lubin and Nana Phadnavis appear to have entered into an agreement for the despatch of a body of French troops to Poona. In a letter to the Captain-General of Goa, dated 12th March 1778, Saint-Lubin informed him that French ships and troops might be arriving shortly at Goa and requested him to allow the ships to remain in the port and the troops to pass through Portuguese territory to the Maratha dominion.[1] He wrote a similar letter on the same day to the Governor of Daman.[2] On the 26th April 1778 he wrote another letter to the Captain-General at Goa, repeating his request to allow two French regiments to pass through Portuguese territory in order to assist the Ministers of the Maratha *Darbar* "to put a stop to the disorders resulting from the death of their sovereign". To remove suspicion about his bonafide, Saint-Lubin explained the reason of his quiet arrival at Poona without the customary marks of an Ambassador Extraordinary, and then stated that he was shortly going to send his secretary with a packet recently received from the Prime Minister of Portugal to disclose the whole affair to him in person.[3] All these statements were perhaps a piece of the deceit and falsehood which characterised the whole career of Saint-Lubin, but it was only natural that the letters, when intercepted by the English, threw them into a fever of excitement and confirmed their previous suspicions about the existence of a secret military agreement between the French and the Marathas.

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[1] Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères: Asie, Mémoires et Documents, B-III—Indes Orientales, Chine, Cochin-Chine, 1660-1772, p. 451.

[2] Forrest—*Selections . . . . . Maratha Series*, pp. 323-327.

Much of the activities of Saint-Lubin at Poona came to be known to the English through his own indiscretion in antagonising members of his retinue to such an extent that they sought the protection of the English representative at the Maratha capital and gave out the whole story, or at least as much as was known to them. One of them was James Madjett, who left him in May 1777, and it was on his statements that the English based their information about the intrigues of Saint-Lubin. Another was de Corcelle, who had been lured by Saint-Lubin to accompany him to India by the prospect of a good career. He was alienated by Saint-Lubin's haughty behaviour and also perhaps by the realisation that he had been duped. Saint-Lubin, who wanted to keep his negotiations at Poona secret even from men of his own entourage, suspected that Madjett and de Corcelle were sending adverse reports to France and giving out information to the English. On this ground their rooms were searched and their baggages pillaged, and Saint-Lubin even went to the extent of making an attempt on the life of de Corcelle. The two men then sought the protection of the English representative at Poona, which furnished a cause of conflict between the English of Bombay and the Maratha Government. The Peshwa's letter to the Governor of Bombay, dated January 27, 1778, accused the English representative at Poona of a breach of diplomatic etiquette in giving protection to two men of Saint-Lubin's party who were detected writing false reports to France.[1] It is interesting to notice that the Supreme Government of Calcutta, in a letter to Mostyn, dated December 29, 1777, expressed strong disapproval of the policy of giving protection to the two Frenchmen, whose bona-fides moreover were not above suspicion.[2] The Captain of the *Sartine,* Coronet, and the Supercargo, Warnet, were also alienated from Saint-Lubin, whose dilatory policy prevented a quick disposal of the cargo of armaments and delayed the departure of the ship for China till the favourable season had passed. Coronet was thrown into prison by the Marathas on the accusation of Saint-Lubin and was set at liberty only after the revolution in the Poona Government in March 1778.[3] He returned to Europe, but Warnet stayed on at Poona even after the departure of Saint-Lubin, looking after the disposal of the cargo of the *Sartine* and carrying on a lucrative business for himself. He was still at Poona when Montigny came on his second mission to India in 1781 and rendered him valuable help in his negotiations with the Maratha Government.

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[1] Forrest—*Selections . . . Maratha Series,* p. 323.

[2] *Ibid,* p. 324.

[3] *Ibid,* 325-327.

Saint-Lubin remained at Poona till July 1778. The abrupt end of his diplomatic mission was brought about by a revolution in Maratha politics in March 1778, resulting in a temporary eclipse of the power of Nana Phadnavis, and the extreme pressure that the English brought to bear upon the new Government to dismiss the French agent. Saint-Lubin had carried on his negotiations principally with Nana Phadnavis, who dominated the Maratha Government till the revolution. The leaders of the new Government, Moroba, Sakharam and the rest, although ex-colleagues of the fallen Minister, did not share his extreme pro-French sympathies and were rather inclined to come to a settlement with the English at Bombay and their protégé, Raghunath Rao. Before the revolution they had sought the armed assistance of the English to overthrow Nana Phadnavis, and the latter were happy to get in that way an opportunity to intervene in Maratha politics to secure their principal object, the dismissal of Saint-Lubin from Poona and the prevention of any Franco-Maratha alliance. After the revolution the new Government followed a wavering policy for some time with regard to the French, but ultimately the pressure from the English proved too strong and Saint-Lubin was obliged to leave the Maratha capital in July.

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[1] Forrest—*Selections . . . Maratha Series,* p. 307.

[2] *Ibid,* p. 308.

[3] *Ibid,* pp. 310-312.

Saint-Lubin was not the man to admit the failure of his diplomatic mission. In order to cover up the discredit of his sudden departure from Poona he gave out the story, quite in keeping with his past, that he was returning to Europe on another secret mission. This time he was being sent by some of the prominent Maratha leaders to hasten the despatch of French troops to India in accordance with the terms of the treaty concluded in 1777. Saint-Lubin started from Daman by a Portuguese boat and travelled by way of the Red Sea and Suez. Back in France, he was besieged by his creditors, the principal being Laffonde who had freighted the ship, the *Sartine;* and unable to meet their demands he was thrown into the prison of Bastille, where he spent his time in writing *mémoire* after *mémoire* to clear himself of all accusations. Later he was transferred to the prison-asylum of Charenton, from where he escaped and took refuge at Trèves. There he spent his remaining years as a wig-maker, perhaps a fitting climax in the career of one who had for the best part of his life successfully practised the profession of an impostor.

As a successful impostor, Saint-Lubin had the distinction of counting among his victims not only the Ministers in France but also the English Governments of Bombay and Calcutta, who appeared terribly alarmed at his negotiations with the

Maratha Government and made frantic efforts to get him out of Poona. There is a large mass of correspondence in the Bombay Archives concerning Saint-Lubin's activities, and it will be interesting to follow from these letters how the course of English policy towards the Maratha State was influenced by their fear of the French adventurer. The English representative at Poona, Mostyn, began to send alarming reports to Bombay from the moment of Saint-Lubin's arrival. Thrown into a panic by such reports, the Governor and Council of Bombay wrote to the Governor-General and Council in Calcutta on May 10, 1777, expressing the fear that if through Saint-Lubin's intrigues the French succeeded in obtaining the port of Chaul or any other in the immediate neighbourhood, it would be harmful to English trade and commerce and dangerous to Bombay in a time of war.[1] Mostyn, in a letter dated May 19, informed the Bombay Council that the object of Saint-Lubin's mission appeared to be the cession of a port on the western coast to the French and permission to establish a factory at Poona. He continued that he had pointed out to the Maratha *Darbar* the ambitious nature of the French and had been assured by two influential members of the Government that no agreement would be concluded with the French which would be detrimental to the English.[2] He enclosed a report on Saint-Lubin's mission based on the evidence of James Madjett.[3]

The most pro-French leader in the Maratha Government was Nana Phadnavis, and the English realised that his removal from office was necessary to prevent a Franco-Maratha alliance. They were seeking a pretext to achieve their end, when in December 1777, by a stroke of extreme good fortune, they received secret overtures from some influential leaders of the *Darbar,* Sakharam Bapu and his associates, for English armed assistance for the overthrow of Nana Phadnavis. The disgruntled leaders expressed their willingness to come to a settlement with the English protégé, Raghoba, and to bring him back to Poona. The Bombay Government at once seized the opportunity of intervention in Maratha politics, mainly because the removal of Nana Phadnavis was necessary to prevent an alliance dangerous to the English.[1] What is more important is that, unlike on the previous occasion when Bombay was censured by Calcutta for its policy of intervention in Maratha politics, it received this time the full approval of the Supreme Government, mainly because of the necessity of averting the supposed French menace. The resolution of the Calcutta Council, dated February 2, 1778, permitted the Bombay Government to accept the overtures of the disgruntled Maratha Ministers with a view to destroy the pro-French element in the Poona administration. Among the terms of compensation to be demanded for military assistance was the exclusion of European settlements on any of the maritime coasts of the Maratha dominions without the previous consent of the Governor-General and Council.[2]

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[1] Forrest—*Selections* . . . . . . *Maratha Series,* p. 288.

[2] *Ibid,* pp. 288-290.

[3] *Ibid,* pp. 290-291.

At this juncture the English met with unexpected good luck. On the 26th March 1778 Mostyn wrote to the Governor of Bombay, informing him about the sudden revolution at Poona, leading to the overthrow of Nana Phadnavis and the coming to power of Moroba, Sakharam and their associates who had sought English assistance before.[3] That made things easier for the English, because as long as Nana Phadnavis remained in power it was impossible for them to prevent a French occupation of Chaul without being accused of open aggression. On this subject the Governor-General and Council, writing to the Bombay Government on February 26, 1778, had expressed the opinion: "As we have no property, nor pretensions to property in the port of Chaul, we cannot authorise you to use any overt measure for preventing the French from forming an establishment at that place, however dangerous their neighbourhood may be to your Presidency. This must be effected by other means, that is, by an appeal to that power which alone can give them the right of possession".[4] At the same time the Governor-General and Council, writing to the Bombay Government on March 23, 1778, expressed the gravest anxiety at the prospect of a Franco-Maratha alliance. "We regard the Marathas as the only native and the French as the only foreign power in the East Indies, capable of affecting the influence which the English nation had acquired in it. The former were prevented from giving us an immediate or effectual trouble by internal distractions, and the inequality of their number to the effect of our discipline; the latter by their want of landed property or any alliance which might supply it. An alliance formed between them would at once relieve all their mutual wants, and afford them all the requisites to dispute with us on equal terms the dominion of the East Indies".[1]

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[1] Forrest—*Selections . . . Maratha Series*, pp. 300-302 and 306 (Consultations—December 10, 1777 and January 19, 1778).

[2] *Ibid*, pp. 309-310.

[3] *Ibid*, pp. 310-312.

[4] *Ibid*, pp. 313-314.

After the revolution at Poona the Bombay Government expected an immediate reversal of the policy of Nana Phadnavis with regard to the French and instructed its agent, Mostyn, to secure the dismissal of Saint-Lubin and the severance of all connections with the French. Mostyn, however, reported from Poona what he considered to be a breach of faith on the part of the new Government,[2] whereupon the Bombay Council expressed grave anxiety and urged the need of taking military measures. "Upon a review of our late advices from Poona, we find too many instances of duplicity in the Darbar to let us doubt but that they will mean to continue the same line of evasive conduct so long pursued by that Government. Mons. de Saint-Lubin is still permitted to remain at Poona, although his dismissal was the very first object of our instructions to Mostyn after the late change in the administration took place . . . . . The Governor-General and Council must be desired to inform us what measures they intend to pursue if the Darbar's answer with respect to their connections with the French should not prove satisfactory".[3]

It was from this anxiety to avert the French menace that arose the necessity of military intervention in Maratha affairs, with the restoration of Raghoba to power as a convenient pretext; and it was for the same reason that the proposal of the Bombay Government received the approval of the Governor-

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[1] Forrest—*Selections . . . Maratha Series,* pp. 314-317.

[2] *Ibid,* pp. 322-323.

[3] *Ibid,* pp. 318-320.

General and Council in Calcutta.[1] On October 12 the Bombay Government resolved to take immediate military action for conducting Raghoba to Poona, but the real object of the expedition was to remove the French menace, as stated clearly in the minutes of Carnac and Mostyn.[2] The principal reason for English military intervention in support of Raghoba is further brought out clearly by Article XV of the treaty concluded with him. "Raghunathrao Bajirao Pradhan hereby engages and agrees that no European settlements shall be allowed to be made on the maritime coasts or in any other part of the Maratha dominions without the consent of the Company or of their representatives being previously obtained, and that no manner of intercourse or connection shall be maintained between the Maratha Government and the French nation".[3] It is not relevant for our purpose to go beyond this treaty and deal with the resumption of Anglo-Maratha hostilities consequent on it.

It is no doubt true that French intervention in the War of American Independence in 1778 gave some ground to the English to feel alarmed at the prospect of a Franco-Maratha alliance. But considering the character of Saint-Lubin and his antecedents, it can hardly be denied that in their panic about the safety of Bombay the English allowed themselves to be duped by him even more than the Ministers in Paris.[4]

MONTIGNY

About the diplomatic mission of Montigny, covering a period of nearly ten years, from 1778 to 1788, our principal source of information is his own voluminous correspondence preserved in the Pondicherry Archives.[5] Many interesting details are also available in a long and anonymous *mémoire* preserved in the *Bibliothèque Nationale,* Paris—*Mémoire et Reflèxions sur les negociations de la cour de France avec les Marathas, et particulièrement sur celle dont a été chargé*

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[1] Forrest—*Selections . . . . . . Maratha Series.* p. 328.

[2] *Ibid,* pp. 328-331.

[3] *Ibid,* pp. 334-338.

[4] A critical account of Saint-Lubin's mission to Poona is to be found in Bibliothèque Nationale Ms. Fr. 12093.

[5] Mss. 5316 to 5364.

M. de Montigny.[1] Montigny's diplomatic work in India may be divided into two periods, the first from 1778 to 1779, and the second from 1781 to 1788, when he left Poona to take up his new appointment as Commandant at Chandernagore. It will be remembered that in 1776 a new vigour was noticeable in French colonial policy, particularly after the outbreak of the War of American Independence, which opened out a prospect of renewal of conflict with the old colonial rival, England. For the first time the French Government began to pay serious attention to the numerous *mémoires* and projects for military intervention in India which had been submitted since 1765 and had been quickly shelved in the Ministerial archives. The project which attracted the attention of the Government most was the one sponsored by Madec and Chevalier in 1775. Its principal features were, as noticed already, an alliance with the Mughal Emperor, a conquest of the province of Tatta and a joint attack on Bengal when the opportune moment came. The Minister of Marine and Colonies, de Sartine, approved of the project, but before accepting it merely at the suggestion of Madec and Chevalier, he felt it necessary to send an enterprising military officer to India to explore the practicability of the Tatta project and, in concert with Madec, to conclude negotiations with the Court of Delhi relating to the proposal of alliance made by the Emperor and Najaf Khan. Unlike Saint-Lubin, however, Montigny was required to keep in close contact with the Governor of Pondicherry and to follow his instructions.[2]

Montigny started from France early in 1777, and passing through Austria, Turkey and Egypt he reached Surat by a Portuguese boat about the middle of 1778. From Surat he wanted to go to Tatta according to his instructions, but contrary winds prevented a landing at the mouth of the Indus, and so he proceeded to Agra, where he expected to meet Madec. He reached Agra on the 1st August "after two months of the most painful journey", as he wrote to Bellecombe.[1] There he was disappointed to learn that Madec had left north India for Pondicherry about ten months earlier. He carried a letter from the Minister directing Madec to confer with him on the project of an alliance with the Mughal Emperor, with special reference to the occupation of Tatta. Madec's absence therefore upset his calculations. Montigny wrote several letters to him from Agra, begging him to return, but, as he feared, the letters were possibly intercepted by the English during the siege of Pondicherry.[2] At Agra Montigny met Visage, a lieutenant of Madec, entrusted with continuing negotiations with the Imperial Court. Through the help of Visage he secured several interviews with Najaf Khan and had an opportunity of discussing the project of alliance which formed the principal object of his mission.

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[1] B.N.F.Fr. 12093. Written in 1784 the *mémoire* discussed the causes of the failure of Montigny's mission as also of the earlier attempts of Chevalier and Saint-Lubin to negotiate a Franco-Maratha alliance.

[2] *Ibid.* It was also arranged that the Governor of Pondicherry would be informed about his mission and ordered to pay him 5,000 livres to meet his expenses in India, but, as we shall see later, no timely intimation was sent and Montigny found himself in great financial straits on his arrival in India (P. A. ms. 5320). He was left completely stranded particularly after the capitulation of Pondicherry in October, 1778.

Montigny gave his impression to Bellecombe in a letter dated October 1778. About the Tatta project, he observed that from the particulars he had received from reliable sources it appeared to be an indiscreet one. The province had been dismembered from the Mughal Empire about thirty years ago and was in the occupation of Taimur Shah, Prince of Kandahar, who had in his service the best troops in Asia. From Visage he had learnt that a draft treaty of alliance had already been drawn up at the instance of Najaf Khan and a copy had been sent to Bellecombe for his approval. He then referred to his interview with Najaf Khan "the only Prince with whom it was necessary to treat at this Court, having at his disposal all the forces and seals of the Empire." "I told the Prince that I had been sent by the Minister to consult first with M. Madec on the subject of a memorandum which he had sent to the Court and about which he (Najaf Khan) knew; that afterwards I had been charged to declare on behalf of the Ministry that it was being seriously contemplated in France to send troops to this country; but that having learnt that he had entered into an agreement with you, I had nothing more to say than that I would wait at his Court pending new orders. He replied to me that he would keep his word which he had given, that he was ready to attack the English if he was sent 800 soldiers and 200 gunners, whom he undertook to maintain at his own cost ....He asked me several questions about the state of the army and navy in France, to which I replied in a manner calculated to make him form a favourable opinion ....I believe, I can assure you that he is sincerely disposed towards our nation. His own interests drive him that way; but if the Prince does not receive any help from us, that may put the matter in doubt."[1]

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[1] P. A. ms. 5318.

[2] *Ibid*, ms. 5325.

Montigny remained in the camp of Najaf Khan till about the middle of 1779, when he proceeded to Poona in accordance with the instructions of Bellecombe.[2] He passed through Hyderabad, where he stopped for a time at the camp of de Lallée, then in the service of Nizam Ali, having been dismissed earlier by Basalat Jang. From there he wrote to Baudouin, Secretary to the Minister of Marine, in June 1779, giving him an account of the impressions he had formed about the attitude of the Mughal Court. He wrote that Najaf Khan was so much anxious for an alliance with France that he entrusted him with a letter for the Minister of Marine and even decided to send Pauli, who commanded the contingent of Sombre after the latter's death, on a diplomatic mission to Paris. Many of the leading personalities of the *Darbar* were also pro-French in sympathy. "They are waiting for my return to this country with armed forces. I have up there a project.........which is easy of execution immediately after landing troops in India. Without armed forces, however, none of the political and military speculations will succeed". At the same time Montigny held out a warning against putting much reliance on the various projects sent to Paris by French agents in India. "Do not make any arrangements regarding the Court of Delhi before I may have the honour of seeing you.......Do not count on the Tatta affair, which is the most foolish project that has ever been submitted to the Government." He wrote in conclusion, "I have a general plan about India, which my travels and observations have enabled me to make and which I am eager to submit to you; and I do not make an exaggerated assertion in telling you that I am not afraid of discussing it in the presence of people most enlightened about this country."[1]

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[1] P. A. ms. 5318.
[2] *Ibid,* ms. 5320.

Montigny reached Poona in July 1779. He did not stay long at the Maratha capital, being anxious to return to France to report on the state of affairs in north India and the prospect of an alliance with the Mughal Emperor. When he arrived at Poona, Montigny found the Marathas still flushed with their recent victory over the English at Wargaon. Talks were in progress at Surat between their *Wakil* and Col. Goddard. He rightly guessed that there was little prospect of drawing the Marathas into an alliance with France until the result of the negotiations was known. At the same time there was a strong rumour about the despatch of a naval squadron by France, and Montigny expected that if it arrived in time the Marathas would break off negotiations with the English and enter into an alliance with the French. In a letter to de Lallée he wrote, "If the English ask for peace with the Marathas, it is possible to believe that they fear the arrival of the French, and as a measure of good policy they will not put themselves against two Powers."[2] In the same letter he also wrote about the current alarm at Poona about the coming of Goddard. "Col. Goddard is expected here with two battalions; that is the rumour current throughout Poona; if that is true, you can take it that my stay here will be very short."

In another letter to de Lallée, dated 7th November 1779, Montigny wrote about his interview with Nana Phadnavis. "On the 28th October Nanafernis called for me and also M. Warnet . . . . . . He appeared to me to be most anxious to know if M. de Saint-Lubin had been sent to the Maratha Court by order of the King. I replied to him that he could rest assured that I knew it to be so from the Minister. I thought that he would push things even further, but he stopped there . . . . Between ourselves, I believe that he has made some arrangements with M. de Saint-Lubin on which he is counting much, and that nothing will make him change until time has shown the effect or the result of his demands."[1]

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[1] P. A. ms. 5325.

[2] *Ibid*, ms. 5328 (letter dated September 19, 1779).

Shortly after Montigny left Poona, and early in January 1780 he started from Goa by a Portuguese ship for Europe. At the Maratha capital he had found himself in acute financial distress, and but for Warnet who lent him money for the expenses of his return journey, he would have been left completely stranded. On his return to France, Montigny won due recognition for his services. He was promoted to the rank of Colonel and was made a Chevalier of St. Louis.

It was only for a few months that Montigny remained in France, and was soon sent out to India on a second mission. Towards the end of 1780 the French Government had taken a definite decision to send an expeditionary force to India, and as a preliminary measure it was felt necessary to prepare the ground by diplomatic contacts with some of the Indian Powers. Since France had lost all her territorial possessions in India, it was all the more necessary for her to gain the alliance of some important country Powers before the arrival of the expeditionary force. Montigny advocated an alliance with the Marathas, as the first step to the formation of a wider coalition which was to include the Mughal Emperor, Nizam Ali and Haidar Ali. During his first mission to India he had formed the impression that the Maratha Confederacy constituted the strongest and the most helpful ally that France could have in India. As against the current opinion in France which considered Haidar Ali as the most useful and effective ally against the English, Montigny held that a preference for the ruler of Mysore would alienate from France other Indian Powers, who despised him as an upstart and usurper and feared his aggressive designs. On the other hand, an alliance with the Marathas, besides gaining for the French the best fighting material in India and an opportunity for military operations on the Malabar Coast, would also bring on their side Nizam Ali of Hyderabad who was then on the friendliest of terms with the Marathas. Further, with the active help of the Maratha Confederacy on their side, the French might with less difficulty be able to induce the Imperial Court at Delhi to take the risk of a joint attack on Bengal. Thus, as Montigny calculated, French interests would be best served by attaching greater importance to an alliance with the Marathas.

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[1] P. A. ms. 5330.

Montigny's arguments impressed the new Minister of Marine and Colonies, Marquis de Castries, who selected him for a second diplomatic mission to India. He was not, however, appointed an Ambassador, nor did he put forward any pretence on that score like Saint-Lubin. In a letter to Piveron de Morlat, the French agent at the Court of Haidar Ali, he wrote, "When you will do me the honour of writing again, you will oblige me, Sir, by not giving me the title of Ambassador. I have not the ridiculous vanity to apply to myself a title which I do not have. The ranks which I hold from the King and the confidence with which the Minister honours me are quite sufficient for my *amour-propre*."[1] Although Montigny was sent particularly to the Court of Poona, his instructions were couched in general terms and permitted him to carry on negotiations with other country Powers as well, without, however, any final authority to conclude treaties. He was placed under the control of the Governor of the Isle of France and was given a number of blank commissions to be distributed at his discretion among the French officers in the service of the Indian Princes.[2]

Montigny started from France in March 1781, just a few days in advance of the departure of the naval squadron under de Suffren. On his way he stopped for a short period at the Cape of Good Hope. France had assumed responsibility for the defence of that Dutch colony and had decided to send troops under Conway escorted by de Suffren's naval squadron. Montigny had instructions from the Minister to wait at the Cape till the arrival of Conway, making note of the state of defences and drawing up a military map of the place. But at the polite insistence of the Dutch Governor, who assured him of full co-operation with the French, he had to cut short his stay at the Cape. Leaving for Conway his observations on the state of defences of the colony, Montigny started for the Isle of France in June.[1]

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[1] P. A. ms. 5337.
[2] B.N.F.Fr. 12093.

In the meantime the political situation in India had taken a turn favourable to the French. Both Haidar Ali and the Marathas, then at war with the English, sought French military assistance. Haidar Ali entered into negotiations with Souillac, Governor of the Isle of France, through Piveron de Morlat, who had been formerly *Procureur-Général* at Pondicherry and since the fall of that place residing at the Mysore *Darbar* as French diplomatic agent. The Marathas also had decided to send an agent named Zainul Abedin to the Isle of France to get the assistance of 2,000 French troops, offering to pay 60,000 rupees per month for their maintenance.[2] When Montigny arrived in the Isle of France, he found Souillac busy making preparations for sending an expeditionary force to the Coromandel Coast to co-operate with Haidar Ali. Although he would have liked to divert the expeditionary force to the Malabar Coast to assist the Marathas, it was too late to alter the arrangements already made. Montigny arrived at Goa in October 1781 and met there the agent of the Poona Government, Zainul Abedin, ready to start for the Isle of France with the proposal of military co-operation noticed above. He stopped the agent from proceeding further, with the assurance that he had been sent by the French Government to negotiate a treaty of alliance.

Starting from Goa about the middle of October, Montigny reached Poona at the beginning of November. Giving his first impression about the political situation at the Maratha capital in a letter to Souillac dated 20th December, Montigny wrote that the coalition of the three southern Powers against the English had broken up, although friendship still subsisted between the Marathas and Haidar Ali. The English were trying to win over the Marathas against Haidar Ali by offering to give up all their recent conquests. Montigny feared that the offer had made such a favourable impression that the Poona Government would be inclined to conclude an early peace. Nizam Ali also, alarmed at the successes of Haidar, was secretly trying to conciliate the English. One principal grievance of the Marathas, as also of Nizam Ali, against the French was their preference for Haidar Ali, and Montigny had a good deal of difficulty to explain why the French had decided to start their military operations on the Coromandel Coast in concert with Haidar and not on the Malabar Coast, as proposed by the Marathas in the agreement with Saint-Lubin. Montigny tried to soothe the feelings of the Marathas by saying that the French would begin operations on the Malabar Coast as soon as the principal expeditionary force would arrive.[1]

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[1] P. A. ms. 5331.

[2] B.N.F.Fr. 12093.

During the early months of 1782 Montigny was in constant correspondence with Piveron de Morlat, the French agent at the Court of Haidar. Their letters reveal the strenuous efforts they made to cement the friendly relations between the Marathas and Haidar Ali and to form a powerful coalition against the English in south India. It is interesting to notice, however, the difference in the viewpoints of the two French agents. Piveron de Morlat laid greater emphasis on an alliance with Haidar. "In the brilliant situation in which Ayder Aly Khan stands, master to-day of nearly the whole kingdom of the Carnatic and at the head of an army considered formidable in this country, ... I do not see any Prince of India alliance with whom could be more suitable to us."[2] On the other hand, Montigny attached greater importance to an alliance with the Marathas, as noticed already. In his letter to Piveron he gave an account of the efforts he had made to prevent the Marathas from concluding peace with the English and forming an alliance with them against Haidar. He wrote that he had succeeded in preserving the friendly disposition of Nana Phadnavis towards the French, and in inducing him to break off talks with the English and to dismiss the English envoy who had come to Poona in January, by holding out assurances about the immediate arrival of a French expeditionary force. But he feared that all his diplomatic persuasions would be of no avail if there was an undue delay in the coming of the expeditionary force. In order to hasten it Nana Phadnavis even wanted to send a letter to Souillac through a Frenchman named

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[1] P. A. ms. 5334.

[2] *Ibid*, ms. 5336.

Chauvigny. The latter, however, went only up to Goa, from where he was recalled in March, on the news of the arrival of the naval squadron under de Suffren.

The news of the arrival of a strong naval squadron under de Suffren and of the landing of troops under Duchemin reinforced the diplomatic efforts of Montigny and induced the Maratha Government to put forward a concrete proposal of alliance with France. After two months of negotiations a draft treaty was finally drawn up in June 1782.[1] The document bore the title "Agreements proposed by Srimat Raja Sri Madhu Rao Narayan Pant Pradhan to Louis XVI, King of France and Navarre", and the preamble explained: "These agreements have been made with M. de Montigny, French Colonel, sent to the Court of Poona, who according to his instructions will submit them to M. Duchemin, General of the French Army in India, so that he may decide regarding these agreements". The treaty contained twenty-four articles, of which only the important ones need be noticed here. By the first article both parties agreed not to make separate peace with the English. "But if circumstances compel one of the two nations to conclude peace with the English, it will not do so without first informing its ally about it." The second article stated that on the arrival of the French forces in India the Maratha Government would place at their disposal the por. of Chaul and the fort of Rewadanda. But all the troops and military stores were to be withdrawn as soon as the French conquered another port from the English. By the third article the Maratha Government promised to supply workmen and transport animals to the French army, and by the fourth it agreed to stand security to native bankers to advance eight lakhs of rupees to the French army for its subsistence during the first four months. The next five articles dealt with the division of territories to be conquered from the English. The French were to retain Surat and Bombay with its dependencies and would also have the right to establish factories at Broach and Cambay but not to maintain troops there. All other conquests were to be handed over to the Marathas. Booties of all kinds were to be equally divided between the two allies. Article 19 stipulated that if the Marathas wanted to invade Bengal, the French must give them military assistance, and in return they would be given a suitable *Jagir*. Another interesting article was the seventeenth, which stated that the French must allow "free exercise of the religion of the Hindus" in all the territories under their control. These were in brief the principal provisions of the draft treaty of alliance proposed by the Poona Government.

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[1] P. A. ms. 5341.

Writing to Duchemin about the draft treaty on the 30th June, Montigny expressed the opinion that the terms offered by the Marathas were the best that the French could expect under the circumstances. He strongly urged their immediate acceptance and the despatch of naval and land forces to the Malabar Coast, without which the Marathas would not make any move at all. "The advantages which are presented to you on the Malabar Coast, the possession of the port and the island of Bombay, of the town and fortress of Surat, of factories at Broach and Cambay which the Marathas are offering us, cannot fail to draw your attention and to incline you unhesitatingly to conclude agreements with a Court whose alliance and support are so necessary to our interest in this part of the world." He continued: "The English are so convinced of the truth of what I am submitting that they are making their best efforts to draw to their side this Power by offering all accommodation." Montigny felt strongly against relying too much on an alliance with Haidar who was disliked by all the southern Powers. "Their jealousy and resentment have been strengthened anew as they see this ambitious soldier being supported and sustained by a French army". He feared that the result of such a policy would be the formation of a strong coalition against Haidar which would be ruinous to French interests. The best course of action for the French was to form a solid alliance with the Marathas. "With that we check Nizam Ali and counterbalance the English forces by a diversion, useful and effective for our projects on the Coromandel Coast." Montigny concluded: "I am very happy for having been able, during the eight months that I have been living among the Marathas, to persuade them to reject the proposal of the English and to make the Regency desire to negotiate with us. I would be very much grieved to-day if I saw the happiest occasion disappear by losing a Power so important for the success of our projects in India".[1]

The fears expressed by Montigny in the last line came out to be true and the project of a Franco-Maratha alliance did not materialise. Two unforeseen difficulties appeared and interposed a long delay in the consideration of the proposals. First, news was received at Poona in August 1782 that Bussy had arrived in the Isle of France as the Supreme Commander of the French expeditionary force. The authority to take a decision on the Maratha proposals was then transferred to him from the hands of Duchemin. Second, Warnet and Chauvigny, who were being sent to the Isle of France with the Maratha proposals, met with an unfortunate accident on the way. Their boat, the *Lézard*, was captured by the English in the neutral port of Tranquebar in October.[2] Chauvigny was taken prisoner, and although Warnet could escape with all the important documents, it was not till February 1783 that Bussy received the Maratha proposals on his arrival at Trinkomali. Even then Bussy did not come to a quick decision and tried to temporise as long as possible in order to keep the Marathas under a delusion. The thing was that, apart from the fact that Bussy did not consider the terms of the treaty to be quite favourable for the French, he had a positive distrust of the Marathas from the very beginning. He openly accused the Marathas of double-dealing, since while putting forward proposals for an alliance with the French they were at the same time, and quite unknown to Montigny, carrying on negotiations with the English. Thus in spite of the frantic appeals of Montigny to accept the Maratha proposals at once, Bussy simply marked time, until the suitable moment for action passed with the conclusion of peace between England and France.

In a letter to Bussy, dated 26th August, Montigny wrote, "I handed over your letter to Nana Fernis, the Regent of this Court and I cannot express to you, my General, how much it has pleased this Prince. 'The face of things is going to change' said he in a transport of joy, 'this French General knows India very well, he was a friend of the great Nana'. He has repeated to me several times the passages in your letter in which you state that the King does not want to make conquests of territories...... but only to restore them (to the Indian Princes)." Montigny then urged the necessity of quick action and immediate acceptance of the Maratha proposals. "Everybody is very well-disposed at this Court, but it is time that you should arrive .... The English are making the greatest efforts here to persuade the Regency to negotiate peace with them and to unite this Power with Nizam Ali against Haidar, our ally...... I am occupying myself unceasingly in counteracting the efforts of our enemies at the *Darbar,* and I have the positive promises of the Regency that it will not negotiate with them if the agreements which it proposes to conclude with our nation are accepted."[1] Montigny concluded by suggesting that the French should begin by capturing Surat, which would serve as a convenient base of operations on the Malabar Coast and free the French from dependence on Maratha ports and territories. A few days later Montigny wrote to Aumont, a French officer in the service of Nizam Ali, announcing to him the arrival of Bussy in the Isle of France and urging him to make all efforts to persuade Nizam Ali to ally himself with the French. He also wrote to Tahawar Jang, the chief minister of Hyderabad, and asked Aumont "to meet him and make him feel that now is the moment for a great revolution, the result of which will be very favourable to the Princes of India."[2]

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[1] P. A. ms. 5342.

[2] *Ibid*, ms. 5345.

The first expectation of Montigny that the arrival of Bussy in the Isle of France would be followed by speedy and decisive action did not materialise, and in two letters to Bussy, dated 22nd December 1782 and 16th February 1783[3], he frantically urged the avoidance of further delay, which might ruin all prospects of building up an anti-English coalition in India. In the first he wrote, "Time is passing and the formidable expeditionary force, announced such a long time back, has not appeared yet. Nana Fernis remains the only one inflexible up to the present to the pressing solicitations of the English and of several great Maratha Chiefs whose *Wakils* do not cease to intrigue in favour of our enemies." He continued, "Commander de Suffren has written to me on your behalf to induce the Marathas to make a move against Bombay in order to create a diversion to the attack which the English seem to have planned against Mysore. I am fully aware of the advantage which such a diversion will give to the position of Ayder Aly Khan; but this Power (the Marathas) will not move unless strongly supported by our forces, and but for the very immediate hope of being allied with the French and being supported by them it would have agreed to the English proposal a long time back." Repeating once more that the four principal Powers of India were favourably disposed towards the French, Montigny wrote, "You can count on the Regency of Poona . . . . . . by concluding solid agreements with it at once and, I may add, by giving it an assured promise to operate on the Malabar Coast during the next monsoon." He had also received encouraging letters from Hyderabad which confirmed that Nizam Ali was willing to seek the alliance of the French and that he intended to send Aumont as his *Wakil* to Bussy as soon as the latter arrived in India. Finally, he had received a letter from the Emperor of Delhi, informing him "that he will not grant an audience to the English agent, whom the Council of Calcutta has sent to him, in the expectation that our forces will arrive in India soon." In the second letter, written in February 1783, Montigny expressed great concern and disappointment at the delay in the arrival of Bussy. Although he was trying to keep the Indian Powers well-disposed towards the French, he feared that the situation might change completely if the French delayed too long in concluding alliances and starting effective military operations in India. About the Maratha Court in particular he wrote, "Nana Fernis yet appears to be holding firm against the machinations of the English and their partisans, but it remains to be seen if he will keep all his promises to me. The death of Ayder Aly Khan and the enterprise and successes of the English against Mysore might easily change the face of things".

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[1] P. A. ms. 5345.
[2] *Ibid,* ms. 5346.
[3] *Ibid,* ms. 5345.

Bussy arrived at last in March 1783. but Montigny's hopes about the immediate conclusion of an alliance with the Marathas and starting operations on the Malabar Coast did not materialise. Bussy made no move at all to gain the co-operation of the Marathas and Nizam Ali, except writing a few letters which produced no effect whatsoever. Montigny's hopes were finally destroyed by the sudden cessation of hostilities at the beginning of July, following news of the conclusion of peace in Europe. He was greatly disappointed at the unexpected turn of events, but he did not lose heart. He continued his diplomatic efforts to keep the Marathas and Nizam Ali friendly towards the French, by assuring them that the peace just concluded in Europe was only a temporary arrangement and that immediately on the outbreak of the next war France would send another large expeditionary force to India. About the possibility of an alliance with the Marathas, he never despaired. In a letter to Bussy, dated 20th October 1783, he wrote that Nana Phadnavis had assured him again "that whether the war continued or peace was made, the Regency had a most sincere desire to preserve the friendship of the French and to form an alliance with our nation; that he knew the perfidy of the English and did not rely on the faith of their promises; that they had already deceived him three times and that he would gladly break with them if he could do it with safety, that is to say, in co-operation with our forces." Montigny continued that the Maratha Government had decided to maintain a permanent *Wakil* with Bussy and had selected a Brahmin named Gopal Rao for the purpose, who would shortly start with Malarois, a French engineer whom Bussy had sent to Poona some time earlier.[1] In another letter, dated 14th December, Montigny wrote, "I saw Nana Fernis and spoke to him about the treaty which he had concluded with the English, a copy of which the Minister (of Marine) had sent you. He told me........that it was quite true that being pressed by the Chiefs of the Regency and specially by the English, he had acquiesced in their peace proposals......that he had been compelled to conclude these agreements in order to gain time and to give time to the French to appear on the Malabar Coast

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[1] P. A. ms. 5351.

. . . . The Prince charged me to tell you, my General, that his intention was always the same . . . . namely that if the French came in force on the Malabar Coast, he would join all the forces of the Regency with ours to destroy or drive away the English." Montigny added that Nana Phadnavis appeared "convinced of the advantage which the Marathas could draw by gaining the friendship of the French, and he charged me to tell you again that nothing was dearer to his heart than forming a close alliance with our nation."[1]

The diplomatic activities of Montigny in the next period till his recall from Poona in 1788 and his work of administration at Chandernagore, from 1789 to 1791, will be dealt with in later chapters. In concluding this section a few remarks may be made about the feasibility of his project of a Franco-Maratha alliance. In his reports to the Minister in Paris Bussy considered the project as wholly unreal, and without questioning the integrity of Montigny, as in the case of other French agents, he regarded the latter as having been duped by the Marathas. Bussy felt convinced that Nana Phadnavis was not sincere in his profession of friendship for the French. He had secretly made peace with the English at the very moment that he was making proposals through Montigny for an alliance with France. It was on the same ground that Montigny had been criticised by the author of the *Mémoire et Refléxions sur les negociations de la Cour de France avec les Marathas etc.*[2] It is no doubt open to speculation whether Nana Phadnavis would have played the game if the French had accepted his proposal of alliance in 1782. It is not unlikely that his negotiations with the French were not inspired by any sincerity of motive, but only to rouse the jealousy and fear of the English, so as to be able to wring out more favourable terms from them. This view may even seem to be supported by the protracted nature of the negotiations which led to the Treaty of Salbai, the treaty having been concluded in May 1782 but the exchange of ratifications being delayed till February 1783. But when we consider that Nana Phadnavis had no reason to prefer the English to the French, that the terms of an alliance with France which he had proposed were most favourable from the Maratha point of view, and that the success of the Allied Powers would have opened out to the Marathas a brilliant prospect of political aggrandisement, it is difficult to understand why, even as an opportunist, he would have held back at the last moment, if the French had quickly accepted his terms and had landed an effective force on the Malabar Coast.

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[1] P. A.. ms. 5349.

[2] B.N.F.Fr. 12093.

Miscellaneous Projects

Besides the more noteworthy persons whose diplomatic projects and plans of military operations we have noticed, there were many others of lesser importance who professed to take a keen interest in the revival of French influence in India and expressed their views in numerous *mémoires* to the Minister of Marine and Colonies. The Archives of Pondicherry and Paris contain hundreds of such *mémoires* submitted between 1763 and 1783 by non-official persons, many of whom preferred to remain anonymous. Their number is so large that it is impossible to make even the briefest reference to all of them; nor will it serve any useful purpose, since most of them do not contain anything new but merely repeat the views expressed in one or other of the projects we have noticed already. It will therefore be sufficient to pick out just a few of them by way of illustration and give only the briefest summary possible.

We may take up first an anonymous *mémoire, Commerce et Colonies de l'Inde*-(1774-75), preserved in the Pondicherry Archives[1]. The author stated that there were two plans that could be adopted to destroy the English power in India. First was the plan suggested by Choiseul which could be adopted only in the event of a war in Europe between England and

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[1] P. A. ms. 201. It bears the original date 20th December 1774 but two pages were added at the end on 28th December 1775, giving an account of the political developments in India during the intervening period. The *mémoire* deals mainly with the trade and commerce of the different European nations in India and it is only in the last few pages that the author discussed the question of how to destroy the English power in India.

France.[1] Its basis was a swift and surprise attack on Bengal by an expeditionary force of five thousand men, aided by a strong naval squadron. But its defect was that it could be put into execution only in a time of war, and even then its success was rather doubtful, since secrecy, the essence of the plan, could not possibly be maintained. The English, once they came to know of the French intentions, would have sufficient time to put their possessions in India in a proper state of defence, and in that case the few thousand French troops, tired by a long voyage and completely unfamiliar with the theatre of operations, could be repulsed with ease. Thus the net result would be an immediate conquest by the English of all the French possessions in India.

The second plan involved a long and complicated programme of preparations but was more certain of execution. The author of the *mémoire* observed, "In order to produce a revolution in Hindusthan it is necessary that the natives of the country should want it, that they should have both the desire and the ability to unite their efforts, and that they be aided and led by a European nation, which has gained their confidence and friendship, by expert military knowledge, a large artillery and good troops." He then stated that the French had, by their military exploits and diplomatic ability during the time of Dupleix and Bussy, gained the admiration and friendship of the Indian Powers, but its effect would be evident only when the French could show sufficient military forces in their different settlements. As a preliminary measure, therefore, the French were to complete the fortifications of Pondicherry, maintain a garrison of 2,000 European troops and 1,000 sepoys and lay in stocks of provisions for at least a year. At the same time they were to maintain a large number of troops and ships in the Isle of France, ready to be sent out to India at the first signal of war. When these preliminary measures were taken, the next step was to maintain a number of able and loyal diplomatic agents at the Courts of Haidar Ali, the Peshwa, Janoji Bhonsla, Shuja-ud-daulah and Emperor Shah Alam, in order to keep them friendly towards the French and ready to join them actively when the occasion arose. With the co-operation of the country Powers, success in war would be assured if the French had an army of 10,000 men, supported by a squadron of six ships of the line and a number of frigates. The first attack should be delivered against Bombay as the best means of inducing the Marathas to co-operate actively. While the expeditionary force from the Isle of France would be engaged against Bombay, the forces at Pondicherry in concert with Haidar Ali were to attack Madras. After the fall of Bombay, the Marathas and Shuja-ud-daulah were to invade Bengal from the north and attract the English forces to the frontier, while the French naval squadron would move up the Ganges and attack Calcutta. Further, an alliance with Nizam Ali would enable the French to land troops on the Orissa Coast and occupy the Northern Sarkars, since most of the English troops there were likely to be recalled for the defence of Calcutta and Madras.

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[1] Choiseul's plan has not been included in our review since its principal objective was not the destruction of the English power in India but a direct invasion of England by taking advantage of a temporary naval superiority in the Channel. In that plan the Indian expedition was to serve as a mere diversion in order to lure away a considerable part of the English navy from home waters. A broad outline of Choiseul's plan has been given in Chapter II.

Another anonymous *mémoire* preserved in the Pondicherry Archives that we may notice here is—*Idées sur l'Inde dans le rapport de rivalité qu'ont nos Établissements avec ceux des Anglais,* dated 1st October 1775.[1] It began with a discussion of the inequality between the position of the English and that of the French. The author then observed that there were two methods by which this inequality could be removed. The first was by opening negotiations between London and Paris with a view to obtain additional territories round the French settlements, large enough to yield an adequate revenue to cover all expenses. The second was by a war with the English, the object being not to make conquests but rather to restore the territories in English possession to their original owners, so that the English and the French would remain in India merely as commercial rivals, placed on an equal footing in relation to the Indian Powers. The author of the *mémoire* was inclined to think that the second was the only feasible method, and he recommended that preparations for war should be completed within the next three or four years. These were to include the construction of solid fortifications at Pondicherry, storage of provisions for two years, training a sepoy force of 2,000, conclusion of alliances with the Marathas and Haidar Ali, cultivation of friendly relations with Basalat Jang who had a French corps in his service, and gaining the co-operation of Sombre and Madec who had large and well-trained armies under their command and had great influence at the Imperial Court at Delhi. The author specially emphasised the need for an alliance with the Marathas, whose extensive dominions, bordering on English possessions all over India, and large cavalry force, swift, light and very effective for ravaging the enemy territories, made them the most formidable foe to the English. In view of the importance of an alliance with the Marathas it was necessary for the French not merely to maintain a permanent diplomatic agent at the Court of Poona but also to spend considerable sums of money to win over the principal ministers. The agent to be kept at the Court of Poona could also be entrusted with the maintenance of diplomatic relations with Nizam Ali and Basalat Jang. With 7,000 European troops, 2,000 sepoys and a naval squadron of 20 vessels, the author felt confident of success if the command was entrusted to an able and experienced person like Bussy.

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[1] P. A. ms. 211.

We may notice a third anonymous *mémoire* preserved in the Pondicherry Archives,—*Notes sur la situation des Anglais dans l'Indoustan.* Although it is not dated, from the contents it appears that it must have been written in 1776, on the eve of the coming of Bellecombe as Governor of Pondicherry.[1] The author began by exposing the falsehood of the notion entertained by most of his compatriots about the ease with which the English power in Bengal could be destroyed and the readiness of the people to rise in revolt as soon as France declared war. On the other hand, the English administration in Bengal was both efficient and popular. "The people are treated well; businessmen have a prosperous trade and their wealth is assured...... Justice is administered with a severe impartiality .... and no precautions are omitted to establish the English authority on a firm basis." Turning to the possibility of gaining allies in north India, the author stated that Shuja-ud-daulah, the Nawab of Oudh, had been friendly towards the French, but his successor was a mere tool in the hands of the English. The Emperor, Shah Alam, and his ministers, Abdul Ahad Khan and Najaf Khan, were inclined in favour of the French, but there was a real apprehension of the Emperor ultimately throwing himself into the arms of the English because of the rapid expansion of English power and the little prospect of gaining any foreign help to stop it. The only factors that prevented the Emperor from taking that step were, first, his experience of English hospitality at Allahabad, and second, his hope of gaining the alliance of France, negotiations for which had been already started through Madec.

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[1] P. A. ms. 233. In the *Catalogue des Manuscrits des Anciennes Archives de l'Inde Française*, Vol. I, Gaudart states that the *mémoire* was possibly drawn up by Law to enlighten his successor, Bellecombe, on the political situation of the country. But there are two reasons to think that it was not written by Law; first, the views expressed here regarding the Tatta project are entirely opposed to the known views of Law on the subject (P. A. ms. 321); second, in this document the writer once uses the first person but just two lines later refers to Law in the third person.

The author of the *mémoire* next referred to the Tatta project and dealt with the advantages that France could draw from the occupation of the province,—a large revenue and a prosperous trade. But apart from these advantages, the Tatta project also furnished the only feasible method of operating a revolution in India. The English position in Bengal was too firmly entrenched to be challenged by a direct attack. "The English, solidly established in Bengal, masters of the Coromandel and Orissa Coasts, in possession of Salsette, Broach and Surat, and without any rivalry with any European nation, are about to seize the whole of Hindusthan. The only means by which we may effect a happy revolution is a double alliance with the Mogol and the Marathas through the cession of Tatta-Bakar." After the occupation of Tatta a part of the French troops could be sent to Delhi. "The first operation would be to re-establish the empire in its ancient splendour and there would afterwards be formed all the projects that might appear suitable." Negotiations could then be started with the Marathas, Nizam Ali, Basalat Jang, Haidar Ali and even Muhammad Ali, Nawab of the Carnatic.

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Next we may turn to a *mémoire,* preserved in the Archives of the Colonial Ministry in Paris—*L'État de la Nation Anglaise en Bengale et le Projet d'Attaque de Calcutta.*[1] It is also anonymous and was written about the end of 1770. The author first gave an account of the military strength of the English in Bengal and the enormous territorial revenues they derived from the province. Next he sketched out a plan of attack on the English position in Bengal. It was based on simultaneous invasions from the north as well as from the south. Calcutta was to be attacked by 2,500 French and 2,000 African troops. At the same time there was to be an invasion from the north by 1,200 French troops joined with the forces of Shuja-ud-daulah, Nawab of Oudh. A successful invasion of Bengal from both sides was possible with the help of a naval force of three battleships, three frigates, seven transport vessels and one corvette. The execution of the plan depended on a solid alliance with the Nawab of Oudh, and the author of the *mémoire* suggested that negotiations should be opened with him at once through Gentil. It was also necessary to gain the co-operation of some of the petty Rajas on the Orissa Coast to facilitate the landing of French troops and their passage to the territory of the Nawab of Oudh. The only importance of this document is that it furnishes an interesting variation of the later plan of Chevalier and Madec, which was based on the co-operation of the Emperor Shah Alam. It shows that before turning to the Emperor, an idea was entertained in some quarters of making an alliance with the Nawab of Oudh as the basis of French policy in India.

Then we notice two *mémoires,* both anonymous, preserved in the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris. The first is,—*Mémoire sur la necessité d'entretenir un Ambassadeur à la cour de Delhi,* dated October 15, 1781.[2] The author stressed the importance of an alliance with the Mughal Emperor as the basis of French policy in India. No doubt the Empire had been disintegrated, the Emperor had been shorn of all real authority, and his vassals had assumed virtual independence. Nevertheless, all the Indian Princes were still connected with the Empire, however nominally it might be, and an alliance with the Emperor was the best means to establish relations with them. Moreover, the principal object of the French was to destroy the English position in Bengal, and that was not possible except through an alliance with the Emperor and a joint invasion of Bengal from the north. The author suggested that Chevalier was the best person to be sent as Ambassador to the Imperial Court of Delhi for concluding a solid alliance. He was a member of the nobility of the Mughal Empire and knew the country, its language and politics better than anybody else.

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[1] A. N.—Colonies: C-2, Vol. 117, Mémoires Généraux.

[2] Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères—Asie: Mémoires et Documents, Vol. VII.

The views expressed in the second document, *Mémoire sur l'Inde,*[1] were diametrically opposite. The author ridiculed all speculations about effecting a revolution in north India and driving the English out of Bengal by an alliance with the Mughal Emperor. Any scheme based on such an alliance was absolutely fantastic, since the Emperor was too timid and too weak in military strength to be able to give any effective help to the French. Moreover, if the French allied themselves with the Emperor, all the vassal Princes, alarmed at the possibility of a revival of the old Imperial authority over them, would at once combine together and seek the help of the English to prevent such a development. Any attempt by the French to re-establish the disrupted Empire was sure to be resisted by all the vassal Princes combined.

Finally, let us notice two other anonymous *mémoires* belonging to the Madec collection and quoted by Emile Barbé in his *Le Nabob René Madec*. The first one is dated 10th June 1777 and addressed to de Sartine, Minister of Marine and Colonies.[2] The author of the *mémoire* was extremely optimistic about destroying the English power in India and did not take into account any difficulty lying in the way. He thought that an alliance between the French and the Mughal Emperor would induce Asaf-ud-daulah, the Nawab of Oudh, to cast his lot with them and free himself from the yoke of the English. Their combined forces would be sufficient to push the English as far back as Calcutta, and if at the same time France sent a strong expeditionary force with some ships to attack Calcutta, the English would be compelled to surrender. The author did not think that France would have to incur any considerable expenditure, since she could get financial help from her Indian allies. Therein lay the weakest point of his plan, since he had no valid reason to assume that the Indian Princes had both the money and the will to finance French military operations.

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[1] Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères—Asie: Mémoires et Documents, Vol. VII.

[2] Barbé—*Le Nabob René Madec,* pp. 181-188.

The second document is, *Mémoire sur L'Empire Mogol.*[1] It is undated, but while Barbé suggests that it might have been written in 1781 or 1782, from the contents it is clear that it must have been written some time after the conclusion of peace in 1783. The author gave a detailed account of the existing state of the Mughal Empire and the growth of the English power in Bengal and north India, and then he suggested a means of effecting a revolution in India. He did not refer to the Tatta project at all, but simply proposed that France should send a small corps of a thousand men to the help of the Emperor. The command should be given to Madec, than whom nobody knew India better. For the first few years the corps was only to help the Emperor in establishing his authority over his vassals. This was to be followed by the conclusion of an alliance between him and Asaf-ud-daulah, the Nawab of Oudh, and a joint attack on Bengal. The author was very optimistic and did not see any difficulty in his way.

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[1] Barbé—*Le Nabob René Madec,* pp. 199-209.

CHAPTER VIII

FRENCH ACTIVITIES IN THE EAST (1779-1781)

I. *Failure to take advantage of English difficulties in India.*

We have seen in the preceding chapters how the French in India refused to recognise their defeat in the Seven Years' War as final. The memory of the earlier successes of Dupleix and Bussy was still fresh in their minds, while they attributed their later reverses merely to ill-luck and to the insufficiency of the resources at their command due to the indifference of the home Government. The very nature of the treaty of 1763, which sought to reduce the French in India to absolute political impotence, inspired in them a determination to prepare the ground for a return match. From the morrow of their defeat, all of them, either in official service or in the employ of the country Powers, were confident of a renewal of the conflict and looked forward to the day when it might be possible for them to strike against their adversaries under more favourable circumstances. The peace of 1763 was considered only as a breathing-space, to be utilised for making preparations for the inevitable renewal of the conflict,—by fortifying the settlements, strengthening the garrisons and building up alliances with some of the important country Powers. For more than a decade, from the re-occupation of their settlements in India in 1765 to the outbreak of the next war in 1778, they drew up innumerable plans of diplomatic alliances and military operations, some of which we have noticed in detail already.

Till 1776, however, the enterprise and initiative of the French agents in India met with little response from the Government in Paris, and all the projects were quietly shelved in the ministerial archives. But with the outbreak of the War of American Independence there came about a change in the policy of the French Government. For the first time it began to stir itself from the lethargy which had seized it since the disasters of the Seven Years' War. The War of American Independence appeared as an opportunity to take revenge upon the traditional enemy of France, and the Government in Paris came to pay more serious attention to the numerous plans submitted for the destruction of the English power in India. In 1777 it even invited suggestions from men with experience of Indian affairs, including past heroes like Bussy. Hoping to take advantage of England's preoccupations in America, the French Government planned to despatch an expeditionary force to India, and as a preliminary step it sent out diplomatic agents, like Montigny, to study the political situation in India at first hand and to build up a ring of alliances against the English. Nevertheless, the Government proceeded very slowly and cautiously while events were moving fast in Europe and America, with the result that when in 1778 France openly intervened in the war against England, not only had she not completed her preparations for the despatch of an expeditionary force to India, she had not even taken any material step to secure her possessions in India from a surprise attack by the English. By the end of 1778 all her possessions (except Mahé which capitulated early in the following year) fell into the hands of the English, and in 1779 France did not possess a single base in India where she could land troops.

This setback diverted the attention of France for the next two years. Completely engrossed in the struggle in America, she made no effort to send an expeditionary force to India, to carry the war to a quarter which supplied the sinews of war to her enemy. Thus she lost the splendid opportunity which offered itself in 1779-80, when the English were fighting against the Marathas and Haidar Ali, with Nizam Ali of Hyderabad being the third potential enemy. Most unwisely she allowed two valuable years to pass without any action, except sending a few ships and some troops for the defence of the Isles of France and Bourbon, which in fact were never threatened by the English. These ships lay idle at Port Louis, and the troops were badly affected by the enervating climate of the Isles. The English did not have any considerable naval force in Indian waters at the time, and the appearance of the few French ships would have produced a heartening psychological effect on the southern Powers engaged in hostilities against the English.

It was not till 1781 that the French Government could make up its mind about the necessity of sending a joint naval and military expedition to India. The first step was the despatch of a strong fleet in March 1781 under one of the ablest naval commanders that France ever produced, de Suffren. This was followed in December by the despatch of an expeditionary force to India under the command of the old hero, Bussy. But it was then too late. By the time de Suffren arrived in Indian waters, the Marathas had virtually withdrawn from the war, and although Haidar Ali was continuing his victorious campaigns in the Carnatic, the small number of the troops landed by de Suffren on the Coromandel Coast in 1782, the inaction of the commander, first Duchemin and then Hoffelize, and the news of the imminent arrival of Bussy with further reinforcements of troops and ships prevented any well-planned co-operation between the French and Haidar. Finally, adverse circumstances delayed Bussy too long on the way, and by the time he arrived in India the war had practically come to an end in America and Europe. Within three months, before Bussy could take any forward move, news reached India about the conclusion of the preliminaries of peace in Europe. For the failure of the French to take advantage of the English difficulties in India during the critical years 1779 to 1781, the blame attaches mainly to the Government in Paris, which concentrated all its attention on America as the principal theatre of operations against England, without any realisation of the importance of India.

II. *Negotiations between Souillac and Haidar broken off by the timidity of d'Orves.*

Let us notice very briefly the activities of the French during the critical years 1779 to 1781. We have seen in a previous chapter how Tronjoly in command of the small French fleet in Indian waters ignominously left Pondicherry to its fate in 1778 during the siege of that place and hastily withdrew to the Isle of France. De la Brillane, Governor of the Isle of France, sent some help to Pondicherry in response to the urgent demands of Bellecombe, but it arrived too late, when the place had already capitulated to the English. He then contented himself by merely taking measures for the defence of the Isle and waited for reinforcements from France to embark on further ventures in India. It was a critical period, and a de Suffren with a strong fleet could have changed the face of things. But instead of de Suffren, the French Government sent out in December 1778 the unimaginative d'Orves with four ships to secure the defence of the Isles of France and Bourbon and to prey upon English shipping in the East. After the arrival of d'Orves in 1779 Tronjoly had a fairly strong fleet under his command, with which he could have encountered the weaker English squadron under Admiral Hughes and could have saved Mahé. But instead of turning to India he merely made some fruitless attempts to prey upon English shipping, and ultimately came back to anchor at Port Louis.

By this time Brillane had been succeeded as Governor of the Isle of France by a more energetic man, Souillac, who was determined to intervene in the war in south India. Fortunately for him, early in 1780 he was sent further reinforcements from France, a few ships and 15 transport vessels carrying the regiment of Austrasie under the command of Duchemin de Chenneville. Another good fortune was that the indolent Tronjoly was succeeded by d'Orves (September 1782) in command of the fleet, which now consisted of six ships of the line, a frigate and two corvettes. Souillac thought that the time had come for an active operation against the English in south India, where they had been reduced to great distress by two formidable enemies, the Marathas and Haidar Ali. The latter carried the war to the Carnatic to cut off the principal source of revenue of the English and commenced his operations with some striking victories. In September 1780, by a brilliant manœuvre, he cut off and took prisoner at Perambakom an entire English detachment under Col. Baillie, consisting of 3,720 men including 500 Europeans.[1] He next captured Arcot, the capital of the Carnatic, and laid siege to a number of forts at Ambur, Vellore, Wandiwash, Permacoil and Chingleput.[2] It even seemed for a moment that Haidar would be able to overrun the whole of the Carnatic, and Madras, which had an inadequate defence, was thrown into a panic. Souillac saw his chance and entered into negotiations with Haidar through Piveron de Morlat, formerly *Procureur-Général* at Pondicherry. Through this French agent at the Court of the Mysore Prince Souillac proposed a treaty of alliance as the basis of joint operations against the English. By it the French engaged themselves to conquer the Carnatic and to drive the English out of south India. In return Haidar was to cede to them a territory with an annual revenue of two crores of rupees, besides the town of Madras and other English possessions in the south. Haidar was also to supply the cost of the expeditionary force at the rate of six lakhs of rupees for one thousand troops.[1]

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[1] Malleson—*Final French Struggles in India and on the Indian Seas*, p. 5. For details see Wilks—*History of Mysoor*, II, pp. 21-26.

[2] Wilks, *op. cit.* II, p. 35.

While negotiations on this basis were in progress, Souillac decided to send out the fleet under the command of d'Orves with a regiment of troops on board to come to a definite understanding with Haidar and to prepare the ground for large-scale military operations against the English in south India. The expedition sailed from the Isle of France on the 14th October 1780, and appeared before the Coromandel Coast, off Cuddalore, on the 25th January 1781. Had d'Orves been a man of even average imagination and enterprise he would have at once seized upon the splendid opportunity of destroying the English power in south India which presented itself on his arrival before the Coromandel Coast. The small English fleet under Admiral Hughes was then on the western coast; Madras was defended by only 500 European troops, and the army under Sir Eyre Coote, which had taken the field against Haidar, constituted the only English force in the south. On the news of Coote's march south about the middle of January, Haidar raised his sieges and concentrated his troops with a view to cut off communication between the English army and Madras. Coote moved slowly, strengthening the garrisons of the principal forts on the way, and suppressing a revolt of the citizens of Pondicherry, who had risen in arms and freed themselves from the English yoke on the news of Haidar's victories in the Carnatic. From Pondicherry Coote proceeded south towards Cuddalore, while Haidar followed him in a parallel line to the west, thus cutting off his supplies from the interior of the country.[1] The only route open to the English for drawing supplies was the sea, which also was closed by the appearance of the French fleet under d'Orves.

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[1] Malleson—*Les Dernières Luttes des Français dans l'Inde et sur l' Océan Indien*, p. 6 (*Note du traducteur*).

In February the position of the English army before Cuddalore became highly critical, and the only means of extricating itself from this difficulty was to draw Haidar to a pitched encounter. But Haidar was clever enough to see through the weakness of the English position. If he could hold on for some time avoiding a pitched battle, he could starve the English army to submission; and the destruction of this army meant the destruction of the only force which the English had in south India. The whole of the Carnatic and even Madras lay exposed to Haidar's army.[2] Haidar requested d'Orves to co-operate with him at that opportune moment by landing the regiment of troops he had on board and by keeping the fleet on the coast. But d'Orves was not the man for the occasion, and rather mysteriously he refused not only to land the troops but even to keep his fleet on the coast to cut off the supplies of the English. The action of d'Orves amounted to a criminal neglect of national interests in a much greater degree than that of d'Aché (1759) or of Tronjoly (1778). Without running any risk whatsoever, by simply keeping watch before Cuddalore, he could have reduced to submission the only English army in the south. But he suddenly decided to leave on the 15th February for the Isle of France, with an empty assurance to Haidar that he soon expected to return to the Coromandel Coast with more adequate forces. By this one step, betraying timidity and selfishness, d'Orves at once cut off the negotiations which Souillac had entered into with Haidar, and was principally responsible for the lack of sincere co-operation between Haidar and the French at a later period.[1]

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[1] For an account of Coote's march see his letter dated 1st March 1781, Secret Select Committee Proceedings, Fort William, 27th April 1781 (Forrest—*Selections from Letters, Despatches etc. Foreign Department, Government of India,* III, pp. 762-765).

[2] For the desperate position of the English see Wilks—*History of Mysoor,* II, pp. 42-44.

Commenting on the conduct of d'Orves, Souillaç wrote: "By this surprising obstinacy of M. d'Orves, about which I sent a report to the Minister at the time, we lost the occasion, never to come again, of becoming the absolute masters of the Coromandel Coast. This army of Cuddalore, consisting of fourteen thousand men of whom three to four thousand were Europeans, composed the entire English force in that part.[2] Madras could not have defended itself, and the junction of our troops with those of Haidar Ali would have enabled us to conquer Tanjore and Masulipatam with all its dependencies."[3] A contemporary English writer remarked, "Had the French admiral left only two frigates to block up the road of Cuddalore, consequences might have happened as fatal to the interests of Great Britain in the East Indies, as flowed in North America from the Convention of Saratoga."[4]

The departure of d'Orves saved the English army at Cuddalore, but Haidar, left to his own resources, carried on the fight in as intrepid a fashion as before. Although defeated in a number of pitched battles,[5] his mobile forces carried fire and devastation all over the Carnatic, reducing the English to a helpless distress; and thus the military situation stood, when in March 1782 a French expeditionary force under Duchemin was landed on the Coromandel Coast by de Suffren to co-operate with Haidar against the English. At this point it is necessary to turn back to the beginning of 1781 and trace the course of events connected with the despatch of an expeditionary force under de Suffren.

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[1] The action of d'Orves was justly condemned by Coote himself in the report of his campaign dated 1st March. "I need not take up your time with commenting on the conduct of the French Admiral, or describing the injuries we must have suffered, and the risk we must have run, if he had acted with common spirit. I may with safety advance that we are entirely indebted to his irresolute behaviour for the little security we now enjoy on this coast. He drew Hyder from Arcot with strong assurance of support and when he came near, failed in the performance."—Secret Select Committee Proceedings, Fort William: 27th April 1781 (Forrest—*Selections from Letters, Despatches etc., Foreign Department, Government of India*, III, p. 765).

[2] The real strength of the English army is given by Wilks—*History of Mysoor*, II, p. 36 (footnote): 8000 infantry, 800 cavalry, 62 pieces of artillery; the European troops numbered 1600.

[3] Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, p. 55.

[4] Malleson—*Final French Struggles in India and on the Indian Seas*, p. 9 (footnote).

[5] Wilks, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 56-86.

CHAPTER IX

DE SUFFREN AND NAVAL ACTIONS IN INDIAN WATERS

I. *Early career of de Suffren.*

Pierre André de Suffren was born in Provence in July 1729,[1] and was the third son of the Marquis of Saint Cannat. We need not go into the details of his early career. From his boyhood he was prepared for a naval career, and in 1743 he joined the navy at the age of fourteen. The young Provencal, for whom the French Government had to create one day an additional post of Vice-Admiral, started his career from the bottom of the ladder and rose step by step to the position of a commander. De Suffren had his first experience of naval combat in February 1743 on board the *Solide* in an action against the English fleet under Matthews, off Toulon. The next memorable naval action for him was in October 1747, when the English Admiral Hawke defeated a French fleet off Cape Finisterre and captured six French ships. Among the prisoners taken was de Suffren himself, who remained in captivity till the conclusion of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748. On his return he joined the Order of Saint-Jean de Jerusalem and went to Malta, but he came back to France in 1754 on the eve of the outbreak of the Seven Years' War. In 1756 he took part in the French expedition against Port Mahon which achieved success, but next year he was again taken prisoner by the English when Boscawen attacked the French Mediterranean fleet in the neutral Portuguese port of Lagos. Two years later he obtained his release through an exchange of prisoners. The ability and courage of de Suffren won due recognition in France after the peace of 1763. In 1777, on the eve of the French intervention in the War of American Independence, he was given the first command of a battleship, the

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[1] Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans -l'Inde,* p. 3. Malleson wrongly gives the date 1726 (*Final French Struggles,* p. 11).

Fantasque. Next year he took part in the naval expedition to America under Comte d'Estaing and gave abundant proof of his dash and intrepidity. It was only a fitting reward to his past record that when in 1781 the French Government decided to send a naval squadron to the East, the choice of the Minister, Marquis de Castries, fell upon de Suffren to command it.

II. *De Suffren and new methods of naval warfare.*

The Indian expedition, by giving de Suffren for the first time independent command of a fleet, enabled him to show his real genius and made him immortal in the annals of naval warfare. It was during the years 1781 to 1783 that he found himself in a position to apply his new tactics of naval combat, which differed entirely from the tradition followed till his time, and which later paved the way for the glories of Nelson. Indeed, this particular aspect of de Suffren's genius deserves some special mention, for it is not very widely known that much of the credit generally given to the illustrious English Admiral of having introduced the modern method of naval warfare should go in reality to de Suffren.

In the 18th century the tradition of naval warfare had hardened into a rigid system of 'fighting in line'.[1] Under this system the battleships proceeded in a single line one after another (from which originated the name of 'ship of the line', indicating a battleship), and the other ships, frigates, corvettes etc., simply formed the retinue of the procession. The line formed by the battleships was a rather closed one, only the length of a ship being the distance separating one from another. It was a sort of moving wall, and possessed in fact certain advantages—mutual help, order and proper surveillance. Moreover, this closed-line formation spared the necessity of having to fire from both sides of the deck at the same time, since the enemy fleet could be only on one side. It was of particular advantage to France (and that was the principal reason for its adoption there), because France could never get the requisite number of sailors to man her navy. Under the line system the navy could do with a smaller number of men, since the ships had to fire from only one side of the deck at a time, and the closed formation of the line prevented the risk of any battleship being caught between two fires by the enemy.

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[1] In France it was Tourville who first developed a tradition which later turned into an unchangeable system under his successors.

Another point to notice about the system is that the fleets in action moved in parallel lines at a respectable distance from each other. It was always a moving fight and the combatants never came within close quarters. Because of this method of fighting, the fleet in those days was not looked upon so much as an offensive weapon as an aid to land operations. It was employed not for the primary object of destroying the enemy ships, but only for carrying troops, munitions and provisions to a particular point, or at most for assisting the army in siege operations. This use of the navy deserves to be noted, if one is to appreciate the departure from tradition made by de Suffren. He gave a new offensive character to the navy, and raised it from its secondary position of being a mere aid to the army.

De Suffren departed from the traditional system even more markedly in the new tactics of attack. Abandoning the principle of fighting in line, he adopted that of concentration of fire. General firing all along the line gave place to 'attack in sections'. By proper manœuvring he would create a temporary inequality in the relative strength of the two fleets in action, and then keeping the rest of the enemy fleet immobilised, he would take one section between two fires and concentrate his whole attack on it. The thing is that, in the line formation, although there was no gap to allow an enemy ship to pass through and thus put one unit between two fires, such a gap always existed in the extreme rear. The last ships of the line could always double the rear of the enemy and thus put it between two fires. In this way, by doubling the rear of the enemy line and concentrating the fire on a section of it, isolated from the rest, the whole fleet could be destroyed part by part. It was this method which de Suffren invariably adopted as his fixed principle of attack, departing wholly from the tradition of the time and ushering in the era of modern naval warfare, for which the credit of originality is usually given to Nelson.[1]

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[1] La Varende—*Suffren et ses ennemis*, pp. 105-120. For a more detailed discussion of de Suffren's originality see Comte Bouet-Willaumez—*Batailles de terre et de mers.*

De Suffren put his strongest and best armed ships in the rear, and these were the ships employed in the real action, while the others simply kept the rest of the enemy line engaged and immobilised.

As in the tactics of attack, in the strategy of war too Suffren was an innovator. In France the navy was looked upon simply as a watchdog of the army. Suffren first showed the importance of naval action in a colonial war. He held that a war must commence with direct naval action. That was to be the first offensive, which, if successful, would enable the employment of the land force effectively and with certainty of success. The credit due to Suffren for his originality of conception and execution is not lessened by the fact that in his operations in Indian waters from 1781 to 1783 he did not achieve complete success, which would have justified more demonstrably the soundness of his new methods. It should not be overlooked that his failure to achieve complete success was due to the fact that his ideas were too novel to be fully comprehended by his officers, many of whom, besides, were mortally jealous of him and denied him that co-operation which would have made his operations as glorious as those of Nelson.

III. *Departure of de Suffren for India.*

We have seen already how from 1778 to 1780 the French Government concentrated all its attention on the American theatre of operations and neglected to take advantage of the English difficulties in India during that critical period. It was only after the replacement of de Sartine by de Castries as Minister of Marine at the end of 1780 that things began to change, and the French Government came to realise the importance of sending an expeditionary force to India. The first step taken was the despatch of a naval squadron under de Suffren in March 1781, followed by the departure of the main expeditionary force under Bussy in December. The decision to despatch a naval squadron under de Suffren was taken not so much for the Indian expedition, but primarily to save the Dutch colony of the Cape of Good Hope from falling into the hands of the English. Holland had joined the war in December 1780, and early in 1781 it became known that

England intended to send an expeditionary force to seize the Cape. At the request of the Dutch, France agreed to send troops to the Cape to save it from the intended attack. De Suffren's mission was to transport these troops to the Cape in advance of the English fleet under Commodore Johnstone, carrying an expeditionary force under General Medows. After landing the troops at the Cape, de Suffren was to proceed to the Isle of France to reinforce the fleet that lay there under the command of d'Orves. The French squadron consisted of five ships of the line, the *Héros* (74), the *Annibal* (74), the *Vengeur* (64), the *Artésien* (64), and the *Sphinx* (64), a frigate, the *Fortune*, and seven transport vessels, carrying troops belonging to the regiments of Austrasie and Pondicherry under the command of Conway.[1]

The appointment of de Suffren to the command of the squadron was due mainly to the recommendation of Comte d'Estaing to the Minister, Marquis de Castries, who in his order of appointment expressed high appreciation of de Suffren's merit. But nevertheless, it created a good deal of jealousy among other officers, some of whom were senior to him in service, and that was one of the reasons for the lack of co-operation he received from many of his captains. Before sailing from Brest with his squadron de Suffren went to Versailles to take leave of the King, and there is an interesting anecdote about this visit. At the palace the usher had some difficulty in conducting de Suffren to the Royal audience through the great crowd of courtiers and hangers-on, and de Suffren remarked, "I thank you for the trouble that you are taking today, but you will see that on my return I shall be able to make my way myself".[2] It reflected clearly the confidence of de Suffren about the glories that he was going to win in the East.

Although de Suffren was elated at the prospect of winning fame, he felt disappointed that he was to have the official designation of commander only till he reached the Isle of France, when he was to serve as second-in-command to the timid and incompetent d'Orves, although retaining the honours and prerogatives of a *Chef d'escadre*. He expressed his feelings in a letter from Brest on March 18, 1781 to Madame de Seillans, his life-long friend and the object of his loyal devotion[1]. "I am going to India in command of a division of five battleships. M. le Marquis de Castries has given me the appointment with the best grace in the world and in a way very flattering to me; but he has not done what he should have; he has not made me *Chef d'escadre,* and I shall be in command only till I join my senior already in India. In truth, there will be eleven ships, and the least happy circumstance may put me in charge of a good squadron and win me glory, that smoke for which we do so many things . . . . . In the Indian waters I shall have the honours and prerogatives of a *Chef d'escadre;* I have learnt it just at this moment. It is a secret which I have not divulged even to my relatives".

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[1] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, p. 5.

[2] Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, p. 65.

For the success of the primary mission of de Suffren, namely to forestall Johnstone and land French troops at the Cape of Good Hope, speed in completing preparations for the departure of the squadron was of the greatest importance, specially when it became known in France about the middle of March that Johnstone had already started. The normal delay in fitting out a naval squadron in France was on this occasion cut short by the personal interest of the Minister, Marquis de Castries, who went to Brest in person to enthuse the sailors and hasten the departure of the ships. On March 15 a fast-moving frigate, the *Fine,* was sent off in advance with Chevreau, Intendant in the Isle of France, and Montigny, appointed to act as agent at the Court of Poona, to announce to the Dutch at the Cape and to Souillac in the Isle of France the departure of a naval squadron under de Suffren[2]. The frigate arrived in the Isle of France on July 10, and enabled Souillac to make hasty preparations for the despatch of an expeditionary force to India.

On March 22 de Suffren, who had taken for himself the *Héros,* a ship destined to justify the name in the fullest measure, started from Brest with his squadron in company with another division under Comte de Grasse proceeding to America. All the ships sailed together up to Madeira, where they parted company at the beginning of April, the division under de Grasse proceeding towards west and that under de Suffren continuing its route to the Cape. While passing off the island of Madeira on April 3, the French came to know from the local fishermen that an English fleet had preceded them a few days earlier.[1] It was evidently the fleet under Johnstone which had started from Spithead on March 13. It consisted of five ships of the line, the *Hero* (74), the *Monmouth* (64), the *Isis* (50), the *Jupiter* (50), and the *Romney* (50); three frigates, all with 32 guns, the *Active,* the *Jason* and the *Diana;* and some lighter armed transport vessels. There were 37 sails in all, with 2,000 troops on board. On April 11 the English fleet reached Santiago and entered the Bay of Praya, belonging to the Portuguese, to procure water and provisions.[2]

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[1] Letters of Bailli de Suffren, published by Ortolan in the *Moniteur Universel,* 5th November 1859.

[2] Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* pp. 65-66.

IV. *Naval action at Porto Praya.*

De Suffren had instructions to proceed straight to the Cape of Good Hope, but when the fleet reached Santiago on April 16, one of the ships, the *Artésien,* wanted to enter the Bay of Praya to procure water. Although the presence of the English fleet there was not known to the French, de Suffren thought it prudent not to allow the *Artésien* to proceed alone and ordered the rest of the squadron to follow her into the bay. The *Artésien,* moving first, made the surprising discovery, and signalled the presence of 37 English ships in the bay. De Suffren at once made his decision to deliver a surprise attack and throw the enemy into confusion and disorder. The decision was rather remarkable in that he had strict instructions to proceed straight to the Cape without any interruption of his course, and secondly that he had no authority to deliberately take the risk of an action against the slightly superior fleet of Johnstone. Indeed, if the result of the fight had turned out unfavourable to the French, de Suffren would certainly have been condemned by the Government for his rashness, because the traditional view of the navy's task was entirely different from what de Suffren conceived it should be. On the other hand, de Suffren felt that the best way of saving the Cape was to cripple the English fleet by a surprise attack, and no better moment could be chosen for it than the occasion which presented itself at Praya. The English ships lay anchored without any ordered formation and in an unsuspecting mood. As de Suffren surmised, a large part of the crew must be ashore in search of water and provisions, which reduced the effective strength of the fleet and put it at a considerable disadvantage. It was no doubt a violation of international law to attack in a neutral port (Praya belonged to the Portuguese), but de Suffren had a bitter experience of the supposed sanctity of international law, as he himself had been taken prisoner in 1757 when the English attacked the French fleet in the neutral Portuguese port of Lagos.

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[1] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* p. 9.
[2] *Ibid,* pp. 18-19.

Thus calculating the advantages of the situation, de Suffren instantly decided to deliver a surprise attack. At half-past ten in the morning, leaving the transport vessels under the protection of the frigate *Fortune,* he signalled to the rest of the fleet to follow in line formation. His own ship, the *Héros,* dashed forward and took up a position between two English ships, the *Hero* and the *Monmouth,* opening a terrific fire. The *Annibal* also came up close, but the other three ships failed to render the co-operation which was expected of them. For more than an hour and a half the two French ships fought stubbornly against an enemy overwhelmingly superior in number. But in the end considering the heavy damage and casualties in personnel that they had suffered in the unequal fight, the *Annibal* having lost all her masts, and there being no hope of any assistance from the other three ships, de Suffren ordered withdrawal, and the *Héros* and the *Annibal* manœuvred out of the bay, continuing their fire in defiance of the enemy.

Although de Suffren was greatly disappointed at the outcome of the action, for which the failure of the other three ships to execute orders was mainly responsible, he had achieved some tangible success. The English fleet had been so much crippled and thrown into confusion that when the French ships sailed out of the bay, it was not in a position to follow up and attack. At half-past three in the afternoon the English fleet sailed out of the bay, and made a move to give the chase, but it was soon stopped by the determined action of the French who stood ready for the fight. It was not till night that the French ships proceeded on their course southwards, and then with all the lights on, so as to draw the English fleet to a pursuit. But the latter had in fact sustained so much damage that Johnstone thought it prudent to re-enter and anchor in the bay for repairs to his ships, which took several days. The delay thus inflicted rendered the English expedition to the Cape useless, as de Suffren was able to land troops there earlier, and from that point of view the vigorous action at Praya had achieved success.[1]

De Suffren's own sentiments about the action at Praya were expressed in two letters to Madame de Seillans. In the first, dated 23rd November 1781, he wrote: "I have some anxiety about the manner in which the affair of the Praya would be taken (in France). M. de Castries has written me a very kind letter, merely on the report of the English (about the incident), but when he will receive my letter he would be even more satisfied". In the second letter, dated 5th December 1781, he wrote: "The Praya could and should have immortalised me; I missed or was made to miss a unique opportunity. With my five ships I could have dictated a peace, and that a glorious one. Your friend would have been worthy of you; Europe would have honoured him. But nothing doing; this combat is of the number of those which have decided nothing and which will be forgotten in the crowd. One may be blamed or praised according to affection, jealousy, caprice or chance".[2]

V. *The Cape saved.*

After withdrawing from the Bay of Praya the five French ships proceeded quietly on their route to the Cape, the convoy having been sent in advance under the protection of the frigate *Fortune*. So confident was de Suffren that the English were not in a position to give the chase that he undertook large-scale repairs to his ship on the high seas—a rather remarkable operation with an enemy fleet so close by.[1] On June 23 the French squadron reached the Cape and anchored in the Simon's Bay, where the injured were landed and sent to hospital, and the troops, consisting of the regiments of Austrasie and a part of the regiment of Pondicherry, under the command of Conway, disembarked for the protection of the Dutch settlement.[2] Through the efforts of de Suffren and Conway necessary defensive works were hastily constructed, and within a fortnight the place was sufficiently ready to meet all attacks. It was not till 24th July, one month after the arrival of the French, that the English ships came in sight of the Cape, but it was then too late and they passed on and anchored in the Bay of Saldanha, from where they sailed off four days later.[3]

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[1] For details of the action at Praya: A. N.—Ministère de la Marine, B-4, Vol. 198; *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* pp. 13-19; La Varende—*Suffren et ses ennemis,* pp. 149-160; Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde.* pp. 69-76; Castex—*La Manœuvre de la Praya;* Malleson—*Final French Struggles in India and on the Indian Seas,* pp. 13-17; Admiral Richmond—*The Navy in India,* 1763-1783, pp. 143-150.

[2] Ortolan—*Moniteur Universel* (5th November 1859).

De Suffren had to prolong his stay at the Cape for a month more in order to complete the repairs to his ships, the *Annibal* particularly being in a miserable plight. On August 15 there arrived two frigates from the Isle of France, the *Consolante* and the *Fine,* the latter having been sent in advance from Brest to announce in the Isle of France the despatch of a squadron under de Suffren. Both Souillac and d'Orves wrote to de Suffren to come to the Isle of France at the earliest possible moment.[4] De Suffren accordingly left the Cape on August 28, and after a rather unhappy voyage the ships reached Port Louis on October 25.[5]

VI. *Arrival in the Isle of France: Souillac's preparations to send an expeditionary force to India.*

In the meantime Souillac, who had been informed of the decision of the French Government to send a strong expeditionary force to India under the command of Bussy, took prompt steps to raise additional forces in the Isles and to procure munitions and provisions for the assistance of the expedition. A man of great energy and patriotic zeal, he was soon able to raise a corps of 2,868 men, including Africans, which was placed under the command of Duchemin, pending the arrival of Bussy,—not a very happy choice, since Duchemin was a sailor and not a soldier. There were in the port under the command of d'Orves six ships of the line, three frigates, and a few corvettes; and this force was considerably strengthened by the arrival of de Suffren's five ships and a frigate, making a total of eighteen.[1] Souillac, who had been in contact with Haidar Ali, decided to send out without any further delay the troops under Duchemin to the Coromandel Coast, as the first contingent of the French expeditionary force to India. Even the indolent d'Orves could not find any plea to postpone departure, after the considerable reinforcements brought by de Suffren.

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[1] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* p. 20.

[2] *Ibid,* p. 36.

[3] *Ibid,* pp. 40-41.

[4] *Ibid,* p. 45.

[5] *Ibid,* pp. 60-61.

The decision of Souillac and d'Orves naturally elated de Suffren, who wanted some real action and not an idle life in the enervating climate of the Isle of France. It is interesting to notice here, from two letters to Madame de Seillans, his impressions about life in the Isle which he came thoroughly to detest, and his hopes and fears about the outcome of the expedition on which he was going to set out from Port Louis on December 7. In the first letter, dated 23rd November, he wrote: "We are going to India with large forces and we should expect success, but there are innumerable reasons which make me fear that we may not achieve it . . . . . A spirit of independence and cupidity reigns here among the chiefs and their subordinates, so that it is difficult to hope for anything good. I have the greatest desire to return and I have asked permission for it with all earnestness". In the second letter, dated 5th December, he wrote: "I am second-in-command of a beautiful squadron. M. d'Orves, who is its chief, shows me great consideration, but since he is so good as to be almost feeble, the confidence which he reposes in me is shared with the public. The little prospect that there is of achieving anything good with men of such character has made me earnestly desire to return. I have received a warm welcome from the public here, but not the same reception from the sailors who have been here for five years without having done anything. This country effeminates people, with its large number of beautiful women, and life full of pleasures. The people here make money in commerce and that is much better than making war . . . . . Our squadron is well-armed for achieving great things, but the qualities we shall lack are intelligence and self-confidence, which are rather rare among us. If we come back from India without doing anything, my decision is made, rather to return to France than remain here in the port for six months. I serve to make war and not to make court to the ladies of the Isle of France . . . . ."[1]

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[1] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, p. 64, for a list of the names of the ships, their artillery strength and the names of their captains.

These letters offer a sufficient explanation why during the whole course of the war de Suffren never left Indian waters for even a brief rest in the Isle of France, as others had done in the past. Rather than returning to the enervating island, he went to Achin in north Sumatra to winter his ships, disregarding the wishes of many of his officers. The second complaint of de Suffren, about the feeble character of his chief, d'Orves, was removed by the timely death of the latter on the way to India, which gave de Suffren the opportunity he had wanted all along, to lead the squadron himself. But the third complaint of de Suffren, jealousy of the officers who had been long in the Isle of France, persisted till the end of the campaign and was largely responsible for his failure to achieve success in as full a measure as he could have expected.

VII. *Departure from the Isle of France and arrival in Indian waters.*

Preparations for fitting out the expeditionary force were completed in a month and a half, and on December 7, 1781 the French fleet, consisting of 11 ships of the line, 3 frigates 3 corvettes, a brûlot and 9 transport vessels carrying the troops under Duchemin sailed off from Port Louis.[2] The original destination chosen was the Coromandel Coast, but d'Orves who had agreed to it at the instance of de Suffren changed his mind during the voyage, in keeping with his usual timidity, and altered the course towards Ceylon. On January 22, the *Héros* made a lucky capture of an English ship, the *Hannibal* of 50 guns, which was coming from St. Helena and proceeding towards Madras. The sailors were dispersed among the French ships, their places being taken by Frenchmen, and the name was changed to the *Petit-Annibal*. The captain gave out the information that 5 English ships with 800 troops on board were on their way to India.[1]

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[1] Ortolan—*Moniteur Universel* (5th November 1859).

[2] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde* (p. 65) gives the following list:

L'Orient (74)—d'Orves (chef d'escadre)
Le Héros (74)—de Suffren
Le Bizarre (64)—de Lalandelle
Le Vengeur (64)—de Forbin
Le Sphinx (64)——du Chilleau

—*Contd.*

A few days later d'Orves, who had been in indifferent health for some time, fell seriously ill, and on the 3rd February his condition becoming very critical he handed over the command to de Suffren.[2] Six days later, on February 9, d'Orves died,[3] a rather fortunate event for the French, which alone made possible the glorious naval actions during the next eighteen months. No sooner had de Suffren assumed command than he ordered the course to be changed north, towards Madras. He wanted to begin his operations in India with a spectacular demonstration, an attack on Madras itself if possible, and on

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—Contd.

L'Annibal (74)—de Tromelin
Le Sévère (64)—de Pallière
Le Brillant (64)—de Saint-Felix
Le Flamand (64)—de Cuverville
L'Artésien (64)—de Maurville
L'Ajax (64)—de Bouvet
La Bellone (32)—de Cillart
La Fine (36)—de Salvert
La Pourvoyeuse (40)—de Galles
La Subtile (24)—de Beaulieu
La Sylphide (14)—de Troulin
Le Diligent (10)—Macé
Le Pulveriseur—Joyeuse
Transports: *Les Bons Amis, L'Oriston,*
Les Trois Amis, Le Brinon,
Le Maurepas, Le Daliram,
La Fille-Unique, La Sainte-Anne,
Le Toscan, Le Hyder (Haidar's vessel)

[1] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, pp. 80-82; Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, p. 85. There is a letter preserved from one of the prisoners taken on the *Hannibal*, David Philips, containing a report of the activities of the French till the beginning of April, when he escaped and reached Madras—Secret Select Committee Proceedings. Fort William, 29th April 1782 (Forrest—*Selections from Letters, Despatches etc. Foreign Department, Government of India*, III, pp. 860-862).

[2] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, p. 86.

[3] *Ibid*, p. 90.

the 4th February he assembled all the captains on his ship to devise the best method of attacking the English fleet if it lay anchored before Madras.[1] Unfortunately for de Suffren, the French squadron lost several days in arriving before Madras, but for which it could have taken at a disadvantage the English fleet anchored there, before it had received some reinforcements on the 9th February. Strong winds and currents carried the French ships as far north as Pulicat, and on the return voyage also they were carried along southwards to Pondicherry, where on the 11th a high-ranking officer named de Canaple was sent ashore to inform Haidar about the arrival of the French expeditionary force. Then the wind having changed its course, the French proceeded north again and arrived before Madras on the 14th.[2]

VIII. *First naval action in Indian waters (17th February 1782).*

The English fleet under Admiral Hughes, consisting of 9 ships of the line and 2 frigates, lay anchored close to the shore within range of the fort battery. On the 15th the French ships approached nearer, within two shots from the English fleet; but with all his dash and intrepidity de Suffren had the clear judgment to realise that the English fleet was in too advantageous a position under the protection of the shore battery to be attacked. At eleven o'clock he called all the captains to his ship to ascertain their opinion about the best course to follow. He himself suggested that it was dangerous to attack the English fleet in its position of vantage, and that it would be prudent to proceed south and land the troops on board. Duchemin and all the captains were of the same opinion, except one, de Salvert, the young and daring captain of the frigate *Fine,* who urged that a spectacular beginning was necessary to create a favourable impression upon the potential allies of the French and that it was possible for the French squadron to pass between the coast and the English ships.[1] But de Suffren thought it wise not to risk his ships between two fires and decided to follow the route to the south.

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[1] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* p. 86.

[2] *Ibid,* pp. 90-92.

About five in the afternoon the English ships were noticed raising anchor and moving out to the open, and although at first it appeared that they were proceeding to take up their former position of anchorage before the arrival of the French squadron, the quick eye of de Suffren did not take long to detect that the intention of the English was to chase and capture the French transport vessels. He at once signalled to the convoy to get between the squadron and the coast, and ordered the *Fine* to watch the movements of the English fleet. But in the darkness of the night the *Pourvoyeuse,* which was in charge of the convoy, lost contact with the transports, and the *Fine* also failed to keep watch on the English ships, which succeeded in getting in between the French squadron and the transports. It was not till about midday on the 16th that the French realised the position. De Suffren ordered all the ships to follow quickly and in the afternoon they came up within a league and a half of the English fleet. Admiral Hughes, seeing the French come up so close, ordered the chase to be abandoned and recalled his ships to form into line. This enabled all the French transports, except the *Oriston,* to escape and proceed at full speed towards south.[2]

All through the night of the 16th and the morning of the 17th the two fleets manœuvred for position, and it was not till half-past three in the afternoon that they could join action.[3]

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[1] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* p. 93.

[2] *Ibid,* pp. 93-95; Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* pp. 88-89.

[3] Table of the two squadrons:

ENGLISH

The Eagle (64)—Reddel
The Monmouth (64)—Alms
The Worcester (64)—Wood
The Burford (64)—Reiner
The Superb (74)—Hughes
The Hero (74)—Hawker
The Isis (54)—Lumley
The Monarca (74)—Gell
The Exeter (64)—King.

FRENCH

Le Héros (74)—de Suffren
L'Orient (74)—La Pallière
Le Sphinx (64)—Du Chilleau
Le Vengeur (64)—De Forbin
Le Petit-Annibal (50)—De Galles
L'Annibal (74)—De Tromelin
Le Sévère (64)—De Cillart
L'Artésien (64)—De Maurville
L'Ajax (64)—Bouvet
Le Brillant (64)—De St. Felix
Le Flamand (54)—De Cuverville

The French fleet had a decided superiority in the number of ships and of guns, and if all the captains had given their sincere co-operation to de Suffren, there is little doubt that the English squadron would have been destroyed. But that opportunity, which would have changed the entire course of the war, was lost because of the jealousy of the captains and their deliberate and culpable negligence to follow orders. In the first place the action, which could have commenced much earlier in the day, was delayed till afternoon by the failure of several ships to take up their positions promptly, in spite of the urgent signals from the *Héros*. Secondly, when the *Héros* led the attack, directing its fire against the *Exeter* and later against the flagship of the English, the *Superb,* the other four ships of the French first division, the *Orient,* the *Sphinx,* the *Vengeur* and the *Petit-Annibal,* followed the orders, and approaching the rearguard of the English within close range concentrated their attack on the *Isis,* the *Monarca* and the *Exeter.* But the entire second division, under the command of Tromelin, consisting of the *Annibal,* the *Sévère,* the *Artésien,* the *Ajax,* the *Brillant* and the *Flamand,* remained completely inactive and at a long distance from the English, disregarding the orders of de Suffren to turn the enemy line and put it between two fires. The *Ajax* did in fact move out to join the fight but had to turn back on the orders of Tromelin.

After a vigorous encounter for more than three hours, when night fell and the weather also became unfavourable, de Suffren, finding no hope of drawing the second division of the fleet into action, signalled to stop the combat. It came as a great relief to the English, who had suffered much greater losses than the French, and enabled Hughes to escape with his fleet from a position in which he faced sure and decisive defeat. Indeed, French historians have criticised de Suffren for not having pursued the English fleet, thereby missing an opportunity never to return.[1] But Suffren's explanation was clear,—it was hardly prudent for him to continue the fight with half the squadron in an openly non-cooperative attitude. When the morning broke, the English ships had disappeared, having sailed off to the south. De Suffren called all the captains on board his ship, where those who had been guilty of bad conduct in the previous day's action apologised and promised to mend their ways in future, which, as later events showed, they never did.[1]

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[1] Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* p. 93.

IX. *Landing of troops at Porto Novo and departure of the fleet for Ceylon.*

On the 18th the French squadron sailed south for Pondicherry, where de Suffren expected to get into contact with Haidar Ali and enter into a formal agreement with him. But when it appeared before that place on the 19th, Piveron de Morlat came on board the flagship to inform de Suffren that he had been sent by Haidar to ask him to proceed to Porto Novo and land the French troops there.[2] De Suffren once proposed to seize Negapatam, which with the other Dutch settlements in India had fallen into the hands of the English soon after Holland had entered the war in Europe. But Duchemin lacked courage, and his objection to the daring project led de Suffren to proceed to Porto Novo, which was reached on the 21st. Here the squadron remained for more than a month, much to the chagrin of de Suffren, who wanted to take the earliest opportunity to meet the English fleet in a second action. But he was unavoidably detained at Porto Novo by the disembarkation of the troops, the negotiations with Haidar Ali which dragged on for a long time, and the difficulties of procuring provisions and other necessaries for lack of money.

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[1] For details of the naval action: A. N.—Ministère de la Marine, B-4, Vol. 207; *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* pp. 95-98; Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* pp. 89-94; La Varende—*Suffren et ses ennemis,* pp. 187-201; Malleson—*Final French Struggles in India and on the Indian Seas,* pp. 21-24; Admiral Richmond—*The Navy in India,* 1763-1783, pp. 191-202.

The English version is different, not so much about the details of the action as about its result. The English Admiral flattered himself that in spite of the decided inferiority of his fleet, he had succeeded in frustrating the French design of an attack on Madras (letter of Hughes to the Governor-General and Council, dated 17th March). The Calcutta Council regarded the result of the naval action as a victory for the English and ordered "that a general discharge of the artillery in the garrison of Fort William be made tomorrow morning in commemoration of this event". A letter of congratulation was also sent to Hughes in the following terms: "We regard your action with the French fleet as the crisis of our fate in the Carnatic, and in the result of it we see that province relieved and preserved, and the permanency of British power in India firmly established"—Secret Select Committee Proceedings, Fort William, 1st April 1782 (Forrest—*Selections from Letters, Despatches etc., Foreign Department, Government of India,* III, pp. 851-854). The same sentiment of satisfaction is expressed in the letter of the Madras Government to the Company (Love—*Vestiges of Old Madras,* III, pp. 259-260).

[2] Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* p. 94.

On the 25th February Piveron de Morlat arrived from Haidar's camp with a message of goodwill from the Prince, and in return two French officers, de Moissac and de Canaple, were sent to Haidar to compliment him on behalf of de Suffren and Duchemin and to come to an understanding for co-operation between the French and the Mysore ruler.[1] Haidar agreed to supply provisions for 3,000 men of the French army, and also to send 6,000 sepoys and a few regiments of cavalry for co-operation with Duchemin's forces.[2] The disembarkation of troops was completed by March 10,[3] but the greatest difficulty of de Suffren was lack of money to buy provisions and other necessaries. The sale at Tranquebar of the prizes captured in Indian waters did not fetch an adequate amount,[4] and de Suffren had to put up with the constant grumblings of his captains, accustomed to the soft and easy life of the Isle of France. All that he could do was to write a pressing letter to Souillac on the 12th March asking for more men, money and munitions.[5]

On the 23rd March the French squadron left Porto Novo and sailed south towards Ceylon in the hope of meeting the English fleet once more.[6] The prolonged stay of de Suffren at Porto Novo had given a much needed respite to the English fleet, which had gone to Trinkomali after the action of February 17 and after a brief sojourn had returned to Madras, there to be reinforced by two more ships, the *Magnanime* (64) and the *Sultan* (74). The French also received at the same time a reinforcement of one ship of the line, the *Bizarre,* and three frigates, the *Pourvoyeuse,* the *Bons-Amis* and the *Bellone.*[1]

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[1] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, p. 101.

[2] Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, pp. 94-95; also Select Secret Committee Proceedings, Fort William, 1st April and 6th June 1782,—letters of Fallofield and Coote to Macartney (Forrest: *Selections from Letters, Despatches etc., Foreign Department, Government of India*, III, pp. 854, 869).

[3] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, p. 103.

[4] *Ibid*, p. 101.

[5] Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, p. 96.

[6] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, pp. 104-105.

In spite of all difficulties and vexations de Suffren was in high spirits and was looking forward to another encounter with the enemy. His confidence is fully expressed in a letter written to Madame de Seillans on the 1st April, "The English have not appeared again since the combat of the 17th February. I am on the sea; I would very much like to give you good news shortly, but for that it is necessary to meet and fight the English. I am in a superb position, commanding 12 ships of the line, ... I now very much fear that M. de Castries may grant my prayer to return which I had made to him, as nowhere else could I be employed in such a brilliant way . . . . .".[2]

X. *Second naval action (12th April).*

De Suffren guessed correctly that the enemy, unwilling to meet in a second action, was likely to take the route to Trinkomali for shelter, and so he directed the course of his squadron that way. On April 9 the English ships were sighted off the east coast of Ceylon proceeding towards Trinkomali, and de Suffren at once ordered his ships to move fast and bar the way. On the 10th the *Fine* made a lucky capture of an English boat, carrying an agent who had been sent from Madras to persuade the king of Kandy to conclude a treaty. The papers seized showed that the mission was a failure and that the king of Kandy had refused to have any relations with the English.[3] For two days Hughes tried to manœuvre to avoid an action with the French, but on the 12th finding the route to Trinkomali barred he had no other option but to order his ships to form a battle line. The action started about midday, de Suffren leading the attack. The French had a superiority in the number of ships and of guns and occupied a more advantageous position than the English. But, as on February 17, they failed to achieve any tangible success because of the old jealousy of some of the captains and their culpable negligence to follow orders.[1]

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[1] Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* p. 95.

[2] Ortolan—*Moniteur Universel* (5th November 1859).

[3] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* p. 113; Roux, *op. cit.,* p. 97.

When the action started, the front section of the French line remained inactive. The *Vengeur* and the *Artésien* kept themselves at a safe distance and practically took no part in the fight, disregarding the repeated orders of de Suffren. The same disregard of orders was shown by a part of the rear, formed by the *Sévère*, the *Ajax* and the *Annibal*. Happily two ships of the rear, the *Flamand* and the *Bizarre*, came up close to the English line and concentrated their fire on the *Isis*, the *Hero* and the *Worcester*. On the French side the brunt of the fight fell on the centre, formed by the *Petit-Annibal*, the *Sphinx*, the *Héros*, the *Orient* and the *Brillant*. The French attack was so vigorous that the *Monmouth* was reduced to a miserable plight and was about to be captured when it was rescued by a brilliant manœuvre by the *Hero*. On the other hand, the French flagship suffered so badly under the concentrated fire of the enemy that at five in the afternoon when the *Artésien* failed to come up to its rescue in spite of repeated signals, de Suffren left his ship and passed on board the *Ajax*, which was then for the first time drawn into the conflict.

By this time the two fleets had exactly reversed their positions and the English ships began to approach the coast, when the combat was brought to a sudden close by the outbreak of a

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[1] Table of the two squadrons:

FRENCH

Le Vengeur (64)—De Forbin
L'Artésien (64)—De Maurville
Le Petit-Annibat (50)—De Galles
Le Sphinx (64)—Du Chilleau
Le Héros (74)—De Suffren
L'Orient (74)—De la Pallière
Le Brillant (64)—De St. Felix
Le Sévère (64)—De Cillart
L'Ajax (64)—Bouvet
L'Annibal (74)—De Tromelin
Le Flamand (56)—De Cuverville
Le Bizarre (64)—Lalandelle

ENGLISH

The Exeter (65)—King
The Sultan (74)—Watt
The Eagle (64)—Reddel
The Burford (64)—Reiner
The Monmouth (64)—Alms
The Superb (74)—Hughes
The Monarca (74)—Gell
The Magnanime (64)—Wolseley
The Isis (56)—Lumley
The Hero (74)—Hawker
The Worcester (64)—Wood

terrific storm about six in the evening. Both the English and the French had to devote all their energies against the forces of nature, which threw the ships into such a state of confusion that the erstwhile enemies lay mixed up in a strange manner all night. When morning broke, neither side was in a position to renew the fight, both being engaged in repairing the ships. In the previous day's action the two sides had suffered almost equal casualties, but the damage sustained by the English ships was heavier; and thus when on the 19th April de Suffren re-formed his line in a new order and came back to the attack, the English fleet taking shelter behind the island of Provedien refused to be drawn into a second action. Finding it impossible to draw the enemy out of his impregnable position, de Suffren proceeded towards the port of Batticaloa while the English fleet entered the port of Trinkomali.[1]

XI. *De Suffren ordered back to the Isle of France; his refusal to leave Indian waters.*

In spite of the readiness of the French for a second action their position was far from happy, and on the 16th April de Suffren sent two boats to the Isle of France, with a pressing request to Souillac to send immediate reinforcements of men, munitions and naval equipments to Galle in the south of Ceylon.[2] The French fleet reached Batticaloa on the 30th April, the delay being caused by strong currents. De Suffren was detained there for more than a month by the necessity of repairing his ships, procuring provisions and munitions and recruiting men. During his forced sojourn at Batticaloa he received some ships with munitions and provisions sent from the Isle of France. At the same time the *Pulvériseur* brought him the duplicate of the ministerial orders (the original having been sent by the *Expédition* which had been wrecked on the Coromandel Coast between Karikal and Tranquebar some time before), calling upon de Suffren to return to the Isle of France immediately to escort Bussy's expeditionary force to India. That put de Suffren in an extremely difficult situation, having to decide between obedience to the peremptory orders of the Minister and the sure destruction of the fleet under the timid leadership of the second-in-command, Tromelin, since the English fleet, yet intact, was only at a short distance, in the port of Trinkomali. Ultimately he did what was required of him in the national interest. He refused to leave Indian waters and explained his reasons in a most convincing manner in a letter to Souillac, dated May 1.

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[1] For details of the combat: A. N.—Ministère de la Marine, B-4, Vol. 207; *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, pp. 114-123; Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, pp. 99-106; La Varende—*Suffren et ses ennemis*, pp. 205-216; Malleson—*Final French Struggles in India and on the Indian Seas*, pp. 25-26; Admiral Richmond—*The Navy in India, 1763-1783*, pp. 210-227; letter of Admiral Hughes dated 1st May, in Secret Select Com. Proc., Ft. William, 23rd May 1782 (Forrest—*Selections from Letters, Despatches, etc., Foreign Dept., Govt. of India*, III pp. 863-865).

[2] Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, p. 405.

"At Batticaloa . . . . . . I found the *Pulvériseur* which handed over to me the duplicate of the despatches sent by the corvette, *Expédition*. Let us pass over the regrets of the past and examine the present situation. The intention of the King was that the squadron should return (to the Isle of France) in March and start back at the end of April, reinforced and repaired: that is no longer possible. Forty-five days for carrying the troops to Ceylon, forty for the voyage, forty-five for repairs, thirty for the return voyage, in all 160 days. That would mean a loss of six months, and God alone knows what the enemies can undertake during that time. It would be wrongly interpreting the intentions of the King and of yours to undertake at the end of April what you had thought of at the end of February; and if after my repeated assurance not to leave the coast, and if after the certainty that you might arrive at from the news sent by the *Bons Amis* and the *Chasseur* that the corvette had not arrived here yet, you had thought it too late and had sent the convoy already in response to my repeated demands, what would I do in the Isle of France? Moreover, if I quit the coast after my combats, M. Hughes, whom I had defeated on February 17 and April 12, would not fail to declare that I myself had been defeated."

Happily for France, Souillac was clear-sighted enough to realise the position and he fully endorsed the views of de Suffren in a letter to the Minister, dated 18th June. Justifying the decision of de Suffren not to leave Indian waters, he observed: "Consider, Monseigneur, the turn that affairs in India might have taken during this long interval; Haidar Ali would have surely made peace with the English; all the other Indian Princes, who are watching the issue of the conflict to decide their policy, would have shown themselves more submissive than ever to a nation whom they do not love but fear; our troops on the mainland would have been faced with a grave danger and it would have been rather fortunate if they could have passed on to Ceylon, against which colony all the efforts of the English would have been directed. It may then be said that the bold policy which M. de Suffren has adopted has saved India and prepared the success of M. le Marquis de Bussy".[1]

The bold determination of de Suffren, however, was not shared by many of his captains, who had been longing for a return to the life of indolence and pleasure in the Isle of France and now seized upon the opportunity presented by the ministerial orders. When they murmured in protest against the decision of de Suffren to stay on in Indian waters, they were silenced by the brave words of their leader, "Rather to scuttle the squadron before the walls of Madras than to run away from Admiral Hughes. Let those who can conceive of such an ignominous action come and tell me, and they will know my resolution".[2]

XII. *Return to the Coromandel Coast—project of an attack on Negapatam.*

On June 3 the French squadron sailed out of Batticaloa for the Coromandel Coast. The destination was Cuddalore, recently captured by Duchemin's forces. On the 4th, as the French passed by Trinkomali, they noticed the English fleet still anchored there.[3] On the 5th they arrived before Tranquebar, where they anchored for two weeks in order to procure provisions and naval equipments. Here they met three Dutch boats sent from Batavia with money, munitions, provisions and naval equipments for the French squadron. The boats had gone to the east coast of Ceylon where the French squadron was supposed to be, but at the sight of the English fleet at Trinkomali they had diverted their course and had taken shelter at Tranquebar.[1] The French also received some quantities of provisions sent by Haidar.[2] Their ships sailed from Tranquebar on the 20th June and on the same day anchored before Cuddalore.[3]

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[1] Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, p. 109; Malleson—*Les Dernières Luttes des Francais dans l' Inde, etc.*, p. 27 (the two letters have been reproduced in the translator's note).

[2] Roux, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

[3] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l' Inde*, p. 132.

While at Tranquebar de Suffren had sent his trusted officer de Moissac to Haidar Ali's camp near Cuddalore. It was necessary, in order to assuage the feelings of Haidar whose relations with the French army under Duchemin had cooled considerably, because of a number of factors that will be analysed in the next chapter. In his deep disappointment at the conduct of the French army under Duchemin, the only thing that prevented Haidar from coming to terms with the English, who were earnestly seeking peace, was the news of the glorious exploits of de Suffren, which held out hopes in the heart of the Mysore ruler that he might yet achieve a crushing victory over the English in co-operation with the intrepid French Admiral. Indeed, although contemptuous of Duchemin, he expressed the greatest admiration for de Suffren. To Piveron de Morlat, the French agent at his Court, he expressed his sentiments thus: "Write to this extraordinary man that I have the greatest desire to see him, to embrace him and to express to him all my admiration for his heroic valour". To his generals he said, "At last, the English have found a master. Here is the man who will help me in exterminating them. I hope that before two years have passed there will not be a single one of them left in India and they will not have even an inch of territory".[4]

Arriving on the Coromandel Coast, de Suffren learnt for the first time of the strained relations between Duchemin and Haidar Ali, and that made him more anxious than ever to conciliate by some bold action an ally whose whole-hearted co-operation was absolutely necessary for the success of French military operations in south India. That was why he sent de Moissac from Tranquebar to Haidar's camp on the 10th June, with a proposal for his co-operation in making a surprise attack on Negapatam. It may be remembered that he had this project in mind much earlier, but had been prevented from attempting it only by the objections raised by Duchemin. He now came back to it, with the added confidence that Negapatam could not expect to be relieved by the English fleet, which was yet lying anchored at Trinkomali.

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[1] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, p. 132.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 136.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 137-138.

[4] Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, p. 112.

De Moissac returned from Haidar's camp to Cuddalore on the 21st and reported to de Suffren the great admiration which the Mysore Prince felt for him. Haidar readily consented to de Suffren's proposal of a surprise attack on Negapatam, and placed 3,000 troops at his disposal for the purpose. He expressed a great longing to meet de Suffren, but would postpone the interview till after the latter's return from Negapatam. At the same time he complained bitterly that the French army under Duchemin, while encamped at Vilnoor, had taken no part in his successful operations against the English, nor had given him any co-operation in the capture of the fortress of Permacoil.[1] As a proof of his friendship Haidar also sent large quantities of provisions for the French squadron.[2]

In return for the friendly assistance, de Suffren sent all the English prisoners on board to Haidar for custody, an affair which later led to bitter complaints on the part of the English. In fact, the responsibility for this must be largely attributed to the Madras Government which had refused all earlier proposals of de Suffren for an exchange of prisoners. The evident intention of the English was to embarrass the French by having to maintain a large number of prisoners on board, which would constitute a heavy drain on their depleted stocks of provisions. Moreover, the French did not have any territorial possession in India, where the large number of English prisoners could be kept in safe custody. The only way that they could get out of their embarrassment, after the refusal of the English to an exchange of prisoners, was to transfer them to the custody of Haidar Ali. That was the reason given by the author of the

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[1] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* p. 138.

[2] *Ibid,* p. 140.

Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde, stating the opinion of the French Admiral himself.[1] It is interesting however to note that in a letter to Souillac, dated June 2, 1782, de Suffren gave an altogether different reason: "It is more in order to increase his (Haidar's) confidence in me than as a reply to the actions of Macartney, Hughes and Coote that I am entrusting the English prisoners to him".[2] Anyway, although in transferring the prisoners to the custody of an ally de Suffren took every care to assure proper treatment to them,[3] it was his ignorance of Haidar's methods of dealing with prisoners of war that led him to take the step, which not merely inflicted incredible sufferings on the prisoners but also created great diplomatic embarrassment for the French at a later period.[4]

At the end of June de Suffren embarked 700 troops of the regiment of Austrasie under the command of d'Espinassy, with 800 sepoys and siege materials, both to replace the disabled sailors as also to take part in the attack on Negapatam.[5] When preparations had been completed, the French came to learn that the English squadron had left Trinkomali and had anchored before Negapatam on the 2nd July.[6] It was a great disappointment to de Suffren, who had expected to take Negapatam by surprise. He did not however abandon his project and decided on proceeding to Negapatam and encountering the English fleet once more. His squadron was in a sorry plight after the two previous actions of February 17 and April 12, and on the eve of his departure from Cuddalore he wrote a pressing letter to Souillac for more men and money.

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[1] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* p. 140.

[2] Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* p. 116.

[3] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* p. 140.

[4] C.R.O., Vol. XII—Extracts from the Proceedings of the Calcutta and Madras Councils relating to the conduct of the French in delivering the English prisoners to Haidar Ali. Wilks has severely condemned the action of de Suffren. He, however, admits the difficult situation in which the latter was placed and the undue delay on the part of the English to reply to the French proposal of an exchange of prisoners, which he explains as due to difficulty of communication and difference of opinion between Coote and the Madras Council. His charge against de Suffren is thus reduced to the latter not having waited sufficiently long for the English reply (*History of Mysoor,* II, pp. 152-153). William Hickey in his *Memoirs,* 1782 to 1790 (p. 59), states that he was told by de Suffren at Trinkomali in January 1783 that there were two reasons which led him to transfer the English prisoners to Haidar,—the silence of Macartney and the reply of Hughes, expressing his inability to accept the proposal of exchange.

[5] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren,* pp. 140-141.

[6] *Ibid.*

"I have embarked 700 Europeans and 800 sepoys; that is quite sufficient to attack the English and take Negapatam . . . . . I did not wish to embark a single person without the knowledge of the Nawab. I am leaving here on land 800 sick; send me men and money; with reinforcements everything will go well, but without them nothing can be done. Misery is so great here that even with merchandise it is difficult to procure money . . . . . (The Dutch of Batavia) sent me 200,000 florins, out of which I have given 50,000 to the Dutch (of Ceylon) and 100,000 to the army; you see in what a state I am . . . . . It is a wonder that the squadron can carry on with so little money . . . . . I am starting to-morrow to attack them (the English); if I am lucky, I shall at once lay siege to Negapatam".[1]

XIII. *Third naval action* (*6th July*).

The French squadron started from Cuddalore on the 3rd July, and on the 5th it noticed the English fleet anchored between Nagore and Negapatam. De Suffren gave orders to his ships to proceed in line of battle. The French had a superiority in the number of ships as well as of guns and had every reason to face a third encounter with the enemy with confidence. But at three in the afternoon the *Ajax* lost its topmast and the mizen-topmast by a violent wind and shower, and was forced to leave the line, giving its place to the *Vengeur*. Shortly after the English ships also, taking advantage of a change in the direction of the wind, sailed out to the open and approached within two shots from the French squadron. For the whole night the two fleets lay anchored, watching each other at a short distance, and early in the morning of the 6th they prepared for action. Great was the surprise of de Suffren when he learnt that the *Ajax* had not been able to complete its repairs yet, and he was stupefied when its captain, Bouvet, wanted permission to take his ship to the nearest port for repairs. He sternly refused permission, but some time later when the French ships were manœuvring for position before the signal for action was given, the *Ajax* quietly withdrew, leaving de Suffren in a position of inferiority in guns to his enemy.[1]

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[1] Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l' Inde*, p. 118 (*letter dated 2nd July, 1782*).

The action started about eleven- o'clock. The English Admiral had given orders to his ships, each one to engage a French vessel, the two sides being equal in number. The cannonade was terrific and continued for two hours. On the French side the brunt of the attack was taken by the *Flamand* fighting against the *Hero* and the *Exeter*, the *Annibal* against the *Isis*, the *Sévère* against the *Burford*, the *Brillant* against the *Sultan*, the *Héros* against the *Superb*, and the *Sphinx* against the *Monarca*. But the *Petit-Annibal*, the *Artésien* and the *Vengeur* remained content by firing from a long distance against the English rear, while the *Bizarre* and the *Orient* lay totally inactive. Two hours of heavy cannonade inflicted severe damage on both sides, the *Flamand* and the *Hero* being compelled to leave the scene of action. About one o'clock a sudden veering of the wind threw all the ships into the greatest confusion and distress, and stopped the combat. Hughes, whose fleet had sustained a damage at least equal to that of the French,

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[1] Table of the two squadrons:

French	English
Le Flamand (50)—De Cuverville	*The Hero* (74)—Hawker
L'Annibal (74)—De Tromelin	*The Exeter* (64)—King
Le Sévère (64)—De Cillart	*The Isis* (56)—Lumley
Le Brillant (64)—De St. Felix	*The Burford* (74)—Reiner
Le Héros (74)—De Suffren De Moissac	*The Sultan* (74)—Watt
Le Sphinx (64)—Du Chilleau	*The Superb* (74)—Hughes Maclellan
Le Petit-Annibal (50)—De Galles	*The Monarca* (74)—Gell
L'Artésien (64)—De Maurville	*The Worcester* (64)—Wood
Le Vengeur (64)—De Forbin	*The Monmouth* (64)—Alms
Le Bizarre (64)—Lalandelle	*The Eagle* (64)—Reddel
L'Orient (74)—La Paillière	*The Magnanime* (64)—Wolseley
Le Diligent—Macé	*The Sea Horse*
La Fine—De Salvert	
La Subtile—De Kermadic	
Le Brûlot—De Joyeuse	

left the scene of action first and proceeded to anchor between Negapatam and Nagore, while de Suffren, who was also in no better position to renew the fight, went to anchor before Karikal and next day proceeded towards Cuddalore, forced to abandon his project of attacking Negapatam.[1]

An interesting incident in connection with the action of the 6th July deserves mention here. The *Sévère,* engaged in a fight with the *Sultan,* was reduced to such distress that its captain, Cillart, thinking it useless to continue the fire, ordered the flag to be hauled down in token of surrender, in spite of the fact that three other ships, the *Annibal,* the *Sphinx* and the *Héros* stood close by. The *Sultan* also ceased fire; but immediately after the other officers of the *Sévère,* defying the authority of the captain, hoisted the flag anew and opened fire on the *Sultan.* The latter, not prepared for a renewal of the attack after surrender and badly damaged in the action, retired from the scene. Next day when the French ships were moving off to Cuddalore, Hughes made a demand to de Suffren for the surrender of the *Sévère,* claiming his right by international rules of warfare. De Suffren who had not yet received the report of Cillart replied that the hauling down of the flag was just an accident, that the ship had no intention of surrendering, which was evident from the immediate renewal of the fight, and that even if it had surrendered it could have been re-captured easily by the three ships which stood close by[2].

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[1] For details of the action: A.N.—Ministère de la Marine, B-4, Vol. 207; *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren,* pp. 142-146; Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* pp. 119-124; La Varende—*Suffren et ses ennemis,* pp. 217-230; Malleson—*Final French Struggles in India,* pp. 35-39, Admiral Richmond—*The Navy in India, 1763-1783,* pp. 236-247.

For the English version see the report of Admiral Hughes: Secret Select Committee Proc., Ft. William, 8th August, 1782 (Forrest-*Selections from Letters, Despatches, etc., Foreign Dept., Govt. of India,* III, pp. 877-881). The Supreme Govt. in Calcutta took it as an English victory and ordered "that the guns of the fort be fired in commemoration of the victory".

[2] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l' Inde,* p. 146; La Varende—*Suffren et ses ennemis,* pp. 231-236; Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* pp. 124-126; letter of Admiral Hughes,—Sec. Sel. Com. Proc., Ft. William, 8th August 1782 (Forrest—*Selections from Letters, Despatches, etc., Foreign Dept.,* III, p. 881).

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But although de Suffren had thus explained off the strange action of the *Sévère,* he was exasperated by the persistently bad conduct of some of his captains, which was mainly responsible for his failure to achieve the success against the English which he could have confidently expected. His patience had reached its breaking point, and immediately on reaching Cuddalore he removed four captains from their posts, sending the three most guilty ones to France to stand their trial, and made a wholesale re-organisation in the command of the ships.

Reporting to Souillac on the subject in a letter dated 31st July he wrote, "There are three captains who have to be sent to France: (1) M. de Cillart for having shamelessly brought down his flag; (2) M. de Maurville (of the *Artésien*) who on the 6th far from effacing had only aggravated the wrongs which he had committed on February 17, April 12 and June 5; (3) M. le Comte de Forbin (of the *Vengeur*) who far from mending his bad conduct of April 12 had conducted himself equally badly". Bouvet, the captain of the *Ajax,* was let off lightly in view of his age, ailing health and past bravery, and was merely removed from his command. These actions, although drastic, were absolutely necessary to restore discipline among the officers and men of the squadron.[1]

XIV. *De Suffren's return to Cuddalore and interview with Haidar Ali.*

The French squadron arrived at Cuddalore on the 8th July. On the 25th Haidar Ali with his whole army approached the place and encamped at a distance of two leagues to the north. He had travelled a long way with the express purpose of meeting de Suffren, whose glorious exploits had roused in his mind a feeling of genuine admiration. On his arrival the French garrison at Cuddalore gave a salute of 21 guns and at the same time all the ships in the roadstead fired in honour of the august and brave ally. De Suffren sent de Moissac to the Nawab's camp to offer his compliments, and on the 26th he himself started for the interview with Haidar Ali which had been desired so ardently on both sides. He was accompanied by some of the captains of his squadron and a battalion of sepoys and made first for the camp of Duchemin at Manjakuppam to meet the General on his sick-bed. There he was joined by two chiefs of the Mysore army with a large escort of cavalry sent by Haidar Ali.

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[1] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* pp. 149-150; La Varende- *Suffren et ses ennemis,* pp. 236-242; Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* pp. 127-128; Malleson—*Final French Struggles in India,* p. 39.

From Manjakuppam de Suffren made a ceremonial journey to the Nawab's camp, where the whole body of Mysore troops presented arms. After a brief halt at the camp of Piveron de Morlat, in the evening he was taken to the *Darbar* of the Nawab who welcomed him with all the warmth of the heart of a warrior. The first meeting was taken up with an exchange of flattering compliments and rich presents, in keeping with the traditions of an Eastern Court. It may be noticed here that the presents offered by de Suffren to the Nawab did not cost the French anything. They had been captured on an English vessel some time before and had been intended for the Emperor of China. To the regret of de Suffren that Haidar Ali had not approached the coast sufficiently near to have a view of his squadron, the latter replied that he had nothing more to desire after having seen the person who commanded it, and who commanded it so gloriously. After the ceremonies of the first introduction were over, de Suffren retired to the camp of Piveron de Morlat, where he spent the night, and next day he was invited to a banquet by the Nawab. Being a *gourmand,* he did full justice to the rich Indian food served, which embarrassed others who had accompanied him. At the end of the banquet he remained in secret conference with the Nawab for a long time and in the evening returned to his fleet. On the 28th he had his third meeting with Haidar, and next day he took his final leave of the Nawab to return to the coast.

The prolonged talks of de Suffren with Haidar Ali had the effect of soothing the bitter feelings of the latter at the conduct of the French army under Duchemin and induced him to furnish supplies required for the army. The confidence which Haidar had in de Suffren, combined with the news brought by de Launay on the 28th July of the arrival of Bussy in the Isle of France with a strong expeditionary force, persuaded him further to remain on the eastern coast to co-operate more effectively with the French forces, in spite of the fact that his presence was urgently required on the Malabar Coast threatened by an English force sent from Bombay. Thus from every point of view de Suffren's personal interview with Haidar was eminently successful. That it did not lead to any tangible military success was due to the lack of enterprise on the part of Hoffelize, who assumed command of the French army after the illness of Duchemin, and to the unfortunate turn of circumstances which delayed the arrival of Bussy in India till some time after the death of Haidar.[1]

XV. *News of the arrival of Bussy in the Isle of France and of the despatch of reinforcements under d'Aymar.*

Arriving at Cuddalore after the action of the 6th July, de Suffren was confronted with immense difficulties. His ships had sustained heavy damages, and for want of materials and of a safe port it was difficult to undertake thorough repairs. The generosity of Haidar, no doubt, had supplied the squadron with provisions, but lack of funds and shortage of men and ships could not be solved except by fresh reinforcements from the Isle of France. Indeed, so miserable was the plight of the squadron that none but the bravest heart could have faced the prospect of another encounter with the English fleet with equanimity. Writing to Souillac on July 30, de Suffren described his position thus: "I can assure you that it is not an easy affair to remain on the sea without money, without magazines, with a squadron very badly equipped in part, and after having sustained three battles; it is, I believe, a matter of good fortune, but I am at the end of my resources".[2]

Happily for de Suffren, it was about this time that he received the first heartening news of the despatch of considerable reinforcements from the Isle of France. While he was engaged in negotiations with Haidar there arrived at Cuddalore on the 28th July de Launay, *Commissaire Général* of the army of Bussy. It was from him that de Suffren learnt about the arrival of Bussy in the Isle of France with two ships, the *Saint-Michel* (60) and the *Illustre* (74), a cutter, the *Lézard*, and a few transports carrying troops. Immediately on his arrival Bussy had sent de Launay by the *Lézard* to open negotiations with Haidar. Launay had landed at Galle in the south of Ceylon and journeyed overland to Jaffina. Crossing the narrow strait he took the land route to Tranquebar, from where he was carried to Cuddalore by a French frigate, the *Bellone*. De Launay informed de Suffren that arrangements had been made for the immediate despatch from the Isle of France of the first detachment of Bussy's expeditionary force under the command of d'Aymar, consisting of two ships of the line, the *Saint-Michel* and the *Illustre*, a frigate, the *Consolante*, and several transports carrying troops, provisions and munitions. D'Aymar had instructions to join de Suffren at Batticaloa where the French squadron was believed to be at the time.[1] It was the happiest news that de Suffren could expect, and he at once set about making hasty preparations to proceed to Batticaloa to meet the reinforcements sent under d'Aymar.

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[1] For an account of the meeting of de Suffren with Haidar Ali: *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* pp. 151-153; Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* pp. 131-135; Cunat—*Histoire du Bailli de Suffren,* p. 190; Malleson—*Final French Struggles in India,* pp. 42-43; La Varende—*Suffren et ses ennemis,* pp. 244-248.

[2] Roux, *op. cit.,* p. 129.

The news of the reinforcements also revived in the mind of de Suffren a desire which he had cherished from the first, namely to capture Trinkomali, the best port in Indian waters capable of accommodating even the largest fleet and protecting it against all attacks. Nobody knew better the difficulty of a fleet to carry on sustained operations in Indian waters without the possession of such a safe shelter to fall back upon in times of necessity. The news of the arrival of reinforcements under d'Aymar decided de Suffren to attempt his long-cherished project and take Trinkomali by surprise. He knew that the English fleet was anchored before Madras, and although it had been reinforced by two ships, the *Sceptre* (64) and the *San-Carlos* (44), it was not likely to suspect his design and proceed in time to the relief of Trinkomali.

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[1] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, p. 153.

XVI. *Capture of Trinkomali.*

Keeping his main project a complete secret and giving out that his intention was merely to go to Batticaloa to meet the reinforcements under d'Aymar, de Suffren started from Cuddalore with his squadron on the 1st August. He had, however, taken care to embark some troops and a company of gunners for the siege of Trinkomali[1]. On the 9th August the squadron arrived at Batticaloa and on the 21st it was joined by the ships despatched from the Isle of France under the command of d'Aymar. The troops (600 men belonging to the regiment of the Isle of France), munitions and provisions brought by d'Aymar were promptly distributed among the ships of the squadron, and on the 23rd de Suffren sailed for Trinkomali.[2] His determination to capture Trinkomali was strengthened by a letter from Bussy received at Batticaloa, expressing regret that the French had not started their operations in Indian waters by seizing that valuable port, but there is no reason to think that he undertook the project merely at the suggestion of Bussy. An enterprising naval commander like de Suffren did not require the suggestion of anybody else to realise the value and importance of such a port as Trinkomali.

On the 25th the French squadron arrived before Trinkomali and anchored at the entrance to the bay. Some time later it moved further inside and anchored in the back bay to the north-west of the fort of Trinkomali both for the safety of the ships as well as for the protection of the landing operations. On the little isthmus there stood two forts, originally Dutch but captured by the English in 1780, the fort of Trinkomali in the north and that of Ostenburg in the south, with the town in the middle. In the evening de Suffren sent an armed boat to explore the coast and find out a suitable place for landing. The spot selected was about a league to the north-west of the fort of Trinkomali, exactly the same place where the English had landed for their attack on the fort. De Suffren understood well that he must race against time, because there was no knowing when the English fleet would re-appear, compelling

[1] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, p. 154.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 160.

him to lift the siege and face another naval encounter, with doubtful prospects. At three o'clock on the morning of the 26th there were landed 2,300 men, including 600 sepoys, 500 marines and a few hundred Malayans, lent by the Dutch for the occasion, the rest belonging to the regiments of Austrasie and the Isle of France. It was not a little surprising that the English made no attempt to oppose the landing. In three days' time, 26th to 28th, thanks to the enthusiasm which the presence of de Suffren had inspired in his men, the French had raised three batteries, one to the west and two to the south-west of the fort of Trinkomali, in spite of the incessant fire of the enemy. On the 29th the French batteries went into action and produced considerable effect on the walls of the fort. On the morning of the 30th de Suffren summoned the Governor to surrender, and after brief negotiations the fort capitulated on honourable terms. The defending troops were to be allowed to come out with all the honours of war and were to be transported to Madras.

The neighbouring fort of Ostenburg also capitulated on similar terms on the 31st. The garrison in each of the forts numbered nearly 150 European troops and 300 sepoys. They had sufficient munitions and provisions to stand a prolonged siege. What forced them to capitulate so early were, first, lack of water, and second, a belief that de Suffren must have won a decisive victory over the English fleet and was thus free to continue the siege indefinitely. They, therefore, hastened to capitulate, in order to secure the best terms possible. On the other hand, the French also, apprehensive of a sudden re-appearance of the English fleet, were anxious to get possession of the forts at the earliest possible moment and were willing to offer honourable terms of capitulation. On September 1 the English garrison embarked on the French ships, and de Suffren had just time to make arrangements for the occupation of the forts when next day the English fleet appeared before Trinkomali.[1]

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[1] For the capture of Trinkomali: A.N.—*Ministère de la Marine*, B.-4, Vols. 207 and 268; *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, pp. 161-166; La Varende—*Suffren et ses ennemis*, pp. 252-255; Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, pp. 140-145; Malleson—*Final French Struggles in India*, pp. 45-46; Wilks—*History of Mysoor*, II, p. 146; Admiral Richmond—*The Navy in India, 1763-1783*, pp. 267-271.

XVII. *Fourth naval action (3rd September).*

After the action of the 6th July the English fleet lay anchored at Negapatam for a few days and then proceeded north to Madras where it arrived on the 20th. Although it received there reinforcements of two ships, the *Sceptre* and the *San-Carlos,* it had sustained such a heavy damage in the action off Negapatam that it was compelled to remain at Madras for a considerable period for repairs. In the meantime Hughes was not without anxiety about the safety of Trinkomali, knowing the intrepid character of his adversary, and he sent two ships, the *Monmouth* and the *Sceptre,* with troops and munitions for the defence of the forts there. On his way to Batticaloa from Cuddalore de Suffren had once thought of exploring the Bay of Trinkomali, but he was so preoccupied with an accident to his ship that he abandoned the idea and thus lost the opportunity of seizing the two English ships there. On the 11th August a French frigate, the *Bellone,* had a sharp encounter with an English frigate, the *Coventry,* not far from Batticaloa where the entire fleet of de Suffren lay anchored.[1] Although a weaker vessel, the *Coventry* could escape but not before noticing the presence of the French fleet at Batticaloa. Scenting mischief, it sailed hurriedly to Madras to give the information to Hughes, who lost no time in proceeding to Trinkomali to protect it against a surprise attack.[2] But he arrived just forty-eight hours too late, only to see the French flag flying over the forts and the fleet of de Suffren safely anchored in the bay.

At the sight of his old adversary Suffren at once prepared for action, but some of his captains, led by de Tromelin, second-in-command, tried to persuade him not to seek battle unnecessarily. The French were, as they argued, in an advantageous position. They were in occupation of the forts and their ships were safely lodged in the bay, where Hughes would not dare disturb them. Fresh reinforcements under Bussy would not be long in coming, and till then it would be wiser for them to avoid an action which entailed the risk of a loss of all their present advantages. In fact, however, the spirit which animated these officers was not so honest as might appear from their arguments. Jealousy of de Suffren, the fatigue of several successive actions, a longing for the life of indolence and pleasure in the Isle of France, and principally the strong resentment at the disciplinary action taken by de Suffren after the combat of the 6th July, were the real motives which prompted the captains to dissuade de Suffren from another encounter with the English. On the insistence of the captains de Suffren merely agreed to put off his decision till he knew the exact strength of the English fleet. When the *Bellone,* sent out to reconnoitre, reported that Hughes had only 12 ships of the line, de Suffren, turning to Tromelin, observed in a firm voice, "If the enemy had superior forces, I would have retired; against equal forces I would have great difficulty in restraining myself from a combat; against inferior forces there can be no hesitation; let us then fight and let the signal be given".[1]

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[1] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* p. 158.

[2] Malleson—*Final French Struggles in India,* pp. 47-48.

There could not be any further argument; but the resentment felt by the recalcitrant captains cost de Suffren very dear in the action which followed. From the point of view of national interest he had no doubt made the wisest decision in not losing this opportunity of destroying the English squadron, weaker in both the number of ships and of guns, before it was joined by the expected reinforcement under Bikerton. The destruction of the English fleet on this occasion would have placed south India at the mercy of the French and their ally, Haidar Ali. It was an opportunity not to come again, and in spite of all his past glories de Suffren would have incurred severe condemnation if he had decided to miss it. On the other hand, he should have known from his past experience that success depended to a very large extent on the co-operation of all the captains, and he should have considered whether that co-operation would be forthcoming in view of the feeling of extreme resentment on the part of many of them. As it actually turned out, he was grossly betrayed by these officers, placing him for a moment in the gravest peril.

On the morning of September 3, the French ships sailed out of the bay to meet the enemy fleet. De Suffren had ordered them to proceed in the line of battle and approach the enemy within close range before opening fire. But due to the deliberate evil intentions of the captains, the ships in the front and rear sections manœuvred so clumsily that the line had not been properly formed even by two o'clock, when the French came up within the range of a cannon shot from the English fleet. The French had fifteen ships in the line, including the frigate *Consolante,* while the English had twelve. Due to bad manœuvring two ships of the French centre, the *Petit-Annibal* and the *Sphinx,* left their allotted positions and joined the five ships of the front section, while another, the *Flamand,* left the centre and joined the rear section. On the other hand, the *Ajax,* belonging to the rear section, joined the centre. Thus the centre, with which de Suffren bore the brunt of the fight, consisted of only three ships, the *Héros,* the *Illustre* and the *Ajax.*[1]

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[1] Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* pp. 148-149.

De Suffren, who intended to fight at pistol range, gave repeated signals to his ships to proceed at full speed and close up with the enemy fleet before opening fire. Impatient at their slowness and clumsy manœuvrings, he repeated the signal once more at half-past two, and in order to draw attention to the signal he fired a shot. His intention was completely misunderstood, and it was taken as a signal for fire all along the line. The French squadron was yet in a state of hopeless confusion. The *Vengeur* and the *Consolante* of the rear section were ordered to double the tail of the English line, but they failed to do so and concentrated their fire on the *Worcester* and the *Monmouth,* while the other three ships, the *Flamand,* the *Annibal* and the *Bizarre,* remained inactive. The five ships of the front section, reinforced by two others of the centre, the *Petit-Annibal* and the *Sphinx,* remained content by firing from a long distance. Thus de Suffren at the centre found himself in an unequal fight with only three ships, the *Héros,* the *Illustre* and the *Ajax.* His signals to d'Aymar and Tromelin to come to his help were disobeyed and the unequal fight went on till about four o'clock. Then noticing that the French centre stood the risk of being surrounded by enemy ships, the *Artésien* stirred into activity and opened a terrific fire, which put out of action two ships of the English front, the *Isis* and the *Hero,* the *Exeter* having been obliged to withdraw earlier.

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[1] Table of the two squadrons:—

French

L'Artésien (64)—De St. Felix
Le Sévère (64)—De Langle
Le St. Michel (64)—D'Aymar
L'Orient (74)—La Paillière
Le Brillant (64)—De Kersauson
Le Petit-Annibal (50)—De Galles
Le Sphinx (64)—Du Chilleau
Le Héros (74)—De Suffren
L'Illustre (74)—De Bruyères
Le Flamand (50)—De Salvert
L'Ajax (64)—De Beaumont
La Consolante (40)—De Péan
L'Annibal (74)—De Tromelin
Le Vengeur (64)—De Cuverville
Le Bizarre (64)—Lalandelle
La Fine (36)
La Bellone (36)
La Fortune (18)

English

The Exeter (64)—King
The Isis (56)—Lumley
The Hero (74)—Hawker
The Sceptre (64)—Graves.
The Burford (74)—Reiner
The Sultan (74)—Watt
The Superb (74)—Hughes
The Monarca (74)—Gell
The Eagle (64)—Reddel
The Magnanime(64)—Wolseley
The Monmouth (64)—Alms
The Worcester (54)—Wood
The San Carlos (44)
The Active (40)
The Medea (36)
The Coventry (28)
The Sea Horse (21)
The Combustion (10)

In spite of this powerful diversion by the *Artésien,* joined later by the *Brillant,* the position of the French centre was extremely critical. At one moment the main mast of the *Héros* fell broken, bringing down the flag. Furious at the *"Hurrahs"* of the English who took it as a sign of surrender, de Suffren thundered out to his men, "Bring all the flags on board and cover up my ship with them". The courage of the commander infused fresh enthusiasm in his men, and the *Héros* started a terrific fire again, putting out of action the *Burford,* the *Sultan* and the *Superb,* till de Suffren was informed that 1,800 shots had been fired altogether and that the munitions had been totally exhausted. In order to deceive the enemy the *Héros* even kept on firing blank shots for some time.

About half-past five the whole of the front section at last came to the rescue of the centre and joined action. The tide now turned wholly in favour of the French. The English ships, already badly damaged in action, were now engaged by the seven French ships of the front section, which had so long taken no part in the battle and were thus in a perfect condition. However, it was too late to assure any decisive result, and as night fell the combat stopped and the two squadrons drew apart. Taking advantage of the darkness of the night, the English ships sailed away for Madras, and the French squadron, not in a position to pursue the enemy, remained at the scene of battle till 6th September, when it started back for Trinkomali. On the 7th one of the ships, the *Orient,* was wrecked at the entrance to the bay and the squadron was held up there for ten days. It was not till the 17th that the ships could anchor in the Bay of Trinkomali in their old position.[1]

The battle of Trinkomali showed in an even more glaring manner than before how much the French chances of success were ruined by jealousy on the part of some of the captains and by their flagrant disobedience to orders. The shameful conduct of these captains was so apparent as to call forth comments even among the English, who condemned these officers as "unworthy to serve so great a man".[2] De Suffren himself gave an account of the battle in a letter to Souillac, dated 23rd September: "I began the combat 15 against 12, as I had put the *Consolante* also in the line. But what you will not believe is that there were only the *Héros,* the *Illustre* and the *Ajax* which fought at close quarters. Yet all, yes all, had the greatest facility to approach, and you, who are a sailor, how can you be persuaded that having gained the head of the line anybody can fail to approach it, and that for vessels with good speed?"[3] To the Minister of Marine also he wrote thus, "I have just missed an opportunity to destroy the English squadron. I had 14 ships and the *Consolante* which I had put in the line. Admiral Hughes was escaping without a fight, or to put it better fleeing in an orderly manner . . . . . It was not till half-past two in the afternoon that I could join him. My line having been nearly formed, I attacked and gave the signal (to my ships) to approach (the enemy) . . . . . Only the *Héros,* the *Illustre* and the *Ajax* fought at close quarters and in line. The others, without any regard to their posts and without making any manœuvre, fired from a long distance, or it is better to say outside the range of a cannon".[1]

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[1] For details of the naval action: A.N.—Ministère de la Marine, B-4, Vols. 207 and 268; *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* pp. 166-178; La Varende—*Suffren et ses ennemis,* pp. 255-266; Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* pp. 147-159; Malleson—*Final French Struggles in India,* pp. 48-55; Admiral Richmond—*The Navy in India, 1763-1783,* pp. 274-285; Letter of Hughes dated 8th Sept.—Sec. Sel. Com. Proc., Ft. William, 23rd Sept. (Forrest—*Selections . . . . Foreign Dept.,* III, pp. 897-898). Hughes admitted that his ships had suffered very severe damages.

[2] Malleson—*Final French Struggles in India,* p. 55. Even the *Calcutta Gazette* admitted that de Suffren was very badly seconded.

[3] Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* p. 156.

Although the battle of Trinkomali met with ill-success, it had one tangible result. It virtually saved the French force at Cuddalore from the English army under Coote advancing to lay siege to that place. If Hughes had joined Coote with his squadron in a perfect condition, the fate of Cuddalore would have been sealed. As it was, when Hughes returned to Madras with his badly damaged ships, the English Council was so panic-stricken and apprehensive of an attack on Madras itself, knowing the intrepid character of de Suffren, that it at once recalled Coote's forces for the defence of the city. De Suffren came to know it from the *Bellone,* which had been sent to the Coromandel Coast immediately after the battle of Trinkomali.[2] To Souillac he wrote on September 13, "For some days I was in the greatest anxiety; I knew that M. Coote was near Cuddalore and I was not in a position to go to the relief of that place. The arrival of the *Bellone,* which brought me the news of the retreat of this general, has quietened my anxiety . . . . . The combat (of Trinkomali) has prevented his (Hughes) combination with Coote and has forced him to retire to Madras".[3]

One of the earliest tasks of de Suffren after the battle of Trinkomali was to deal with the captains who had been guilty of deliberate bad conduct. But although he had every reason to take drastic steps, as he had done after the action of the 6th July, he thought it prudent to deal leniently with them, and on the request of four of them, de Tromelin, Saint-Felix, de Lalandelle and de Galles, he granted them permission to return to the Isle of France.[4] In a letter dated September 29, he reported the matter thus to Marquis de Castries, "Messrs.

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[1] La Varende—*Suffren et ses ennemis,* pp. 268-269.

[2] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* p. 176.

[3] Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* p. 159.

[4] *Ibid.,* pp. 159-160; *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* p. 178; La Varende, *Op. Cit.,* p. 267.

de Lalandelle, de Tromelin, de Saint-Felix and de Galles have asked permission to leave their ships. I have been too dissatisfied with them not to grant the permission with pleasure. If I do not remove several others, it is only due to want of suitable persons to command their ships".[1]

XVIII. *Decision to winter at Achin.*

The French squadron remained at Trinkomali till the 1st October, when it sailed for Cuddalore with the intention of wintering at Achin in north Sumatra, Trinkomali requiring considerable time and labour to be made suitable for the purpose. Although the ships had been repaired as best as possible under the circumstances, de Suffren was faced with great difficulties for lack of munitions, provisions and naval equipments, and on the day of his departure from Trinkomali he wrote to Souillac: "I am going to the *rendez-vous* (Achin, where he had asked Bussy to meet him); I do not know whether I shall be able to reach the place; my position is most embarrassing . . . . . Send me, at Trinkomali, as much munitions, provisions and naval equipments as you can . . . . . ".[2]

Starting from Trinkomali on the 1st October, de Suffren reached Cuddalore on the 4th. On the way he learnt about the capture of a cutter, the *Lézard,* by the English in the neutral roadstead of Tranquebar. He suffered an even greater misfortune when one of the ships of the squadron, the *Bizarre,* was wrecked on the sand-bar just off Cuddalore and could not be saved even with the best efforts.[3] These successive disasters grieved de Suffren all the more, as he learnt about the same time of the arrival at Bombay of Bikerton's squadron of six ships of the line. The junction of Bikerton with Hughes would make the fight grossly unequal, at least till the arrival of Bussy with reinforcements. De Suffren thus thought it prudent to leave the Coromandel Coast and to go to Achin in north Sumatra for wintering his ships, having already sent information to the Isle of France asking Bussy to proceed straight to

[1] La Varende—*Suffren et ses ennemis,* p. 270.

[2] Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* p. 160.

[3] *Ibid.,* p. 162; *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren,* pp. 182-183.

Achin and join him there. But in order not to betray the weakness of his position he gave out that he was returning to Trinkomali to winter there, and to make the deception more real he even took on board a few officers and provisions for the garrisons of the forts there.

De Suffren started from Cuddalore on the 15th October, just escaping a violent storm which caused great damage to the English fleet anchored before Madras. Hughes was compelled to leave the Coromandel Coast and he proceeded to Bombay for wintering there. Just four days after his departure Bikerton arrived with his squadron, but not finding Hughes before Madras he returned to Bombay where the two squadrons joined in December. De Suffren was therefore rather lucky in escaping from the Coromandel Coast just in time, as he could have hardly saved himself against the much superior English fleet if Bikerton had joined Hughes in time. The danger to de Suffren was all the more apparent in that the Dutch, who had eight warships at Batavia, made no move to come to the assistance of the French squadron.[1]

The French squadron reached Achin on the 2nd November.[2] The author of the *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l' Inde* wrote about this place,[3] "Achen is an excellent port for wintering, as much for the safety of the ships as for the supply of provisions which are in abundance there. Water is very easily procurable from the river . . . . . it is not necessary to go much high up to find sweet water. We have been permitted to buy wood from the Pulo Way". Although food was extremely cheap, the writer did not like the place for its unhealthy climate. "The number of our sick has increased in place of diminishing". It was because the country was full of marshes and little streams and suffered innundations during rains. The people were rather ferocious; and jealous of their women, "although not of a tempting beauty", they disliked the intrusion of foreigners. On arrival at Achin, de Suffren sent de Moissac to negotiate with the king for the supply of wood and provisions for the squadron. The latter showed himself at first unwilling to render any help, having never seen such a large number of warships and being apprehensive of their real intentions. But de Suffren was extremely cautious and took care to avoid giving any cause of complaint to the king or to the people of the country, retaining the sick on board and not permitting his men to go ashore. The wise conduct of de Suffren re-assured the king of his friendly intentions, and he agreed to supply the squadron with whatever the French wanted.[1]

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[1] Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, pp. 163-165; Love—*Vestiges of Old Madras*, III, pp. 261-262. Love states that Bikerton's ships actually joined the squadron of Hughes before the latter left the Coromandel Coast but that even then Hughes left for Bombay disregarding the protests of the Madras Government.

[2] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren*, p. 191.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 199-200.

On the 24th November there arrived from the Isle of France the *Duc de Chartres* with munitions and provisions, and also with the news of the naval defeats in Europe and America and of the outbreak of an epidemic on board the ships brought by Peinier to the Isle of France which delayed Bussy's departure for India.[2] It was a most disheartening news for de Suffren, with only eight ships and a few thousand men at Achin, and with no definite news about the time of Bussy's coming to join him[3]. But he was not the man to yield himself to despair, and learning about the same time that Hughes had left for Bombay, he decided on taking advantage of the absence of the enemy fleet from the eastern coast to prey upon English merchant shipping and to attack Ganjam and other English possessions on the Orissa Coast.

XIX. *Return from Achin and junction with Bussy's expeditionary force.*

After having repaired his ships as best as he could, de Suffren left Achin on the 20th December and made for the Orissa Coast, detailing two fast-moving vessels, the *Petit-Annibal* and the *Bellone*, to the mouth of the Ganges to intercept shipping coming from Bengal.[1] On the 8th January 1783, the squadron anchored off Ganjam, but though de Suffren had a definite intention of attacking the place, he had to give up the plan as the nature of the road made a landing extremely difficult without the assistance of light country boats[2]. Disappointed in their main objective, the French were successful in capturing a number of vessels carrying provisions and merchandise. The most important capture was an English frigate, the *Coventry*, which was proceeding unsuspectingly and was seized on the 11th January. It was from the captain of this frigate that de Suffren came to know of the sudden death of Haidar Ali on the 7th December and of the uncertain prospect facing the allied Franco-Mysorean forces, Haidar's son Tipu then being far away on the Malabar Coast[3]. De Suffren at once decided to abandon his projects on the Orissa Coast and to return to Cuddalore to assure himself of the position of the French army and of the co-operation of Haidar's successor[4].

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[1] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren*, pp. 192-194; Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, pp. 165-166.

[2] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren*, p. 196.

[3] He expressed his feelings in a letter to Madame de Seillans, dated 30th November (Ortolan—*Moniteur Universel*, 5th Nov. 1859).

Leaving Ganjam on the 15th January, de Suffren arrived before Pondicherry on the 5th February. There he learnt the details of the death of Haidar and of the conduct of the French army in assuring the peaceful succession of his son, Tipu[5]. The squadron arrived before Cuddalore on the 6th and five days later started for Trinkomali.[6] On the 15th while the ships lay anchored at Porto Novo, Piveron de Morlat came to see de Suffren and informed him that the new Nawab, Tipu, intended to return to the Malabar Coast at once to save his possessions from the invading army under Matthews. That would deprive the French army of the assistance of a valuable ally and put it in an extremely critical position on the Coromandel Coast. The attempts of Hoffelize in command of the French army to persuade Tipu to stay on the eastern coast till the arrival of Bussy's expeditionary force had proved fruitless, as there was no knowing when Bussy would come. Piveron was sent to de Suffren in the hope that having so much influence over the father, he would be able to prevail upon the son to stay on the Coromandel Coast for some time more. De Suffren accordingly sent a letter to the Nawab through Piveron de Morlat, but, as we shall see later, the uncertainty of Bussy's arrival and the rapid successes of Matthew's army ultimately compelled Tipu to leave for the Malabar Coast at the beginning of March.[1]

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[1] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren*, pp. 199-201.

[2] Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, p. 168.

[3] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren*, pp. 208-211; Love—*Vestiges of Old Madras*, III, pp. 264-266.

[4] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren*, pp. 213-217.

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 221-222.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 222-223.

On the 16th the squadron started from Porto Novo and reached Trinkomali on the 23rd. Three days later there arrived a corvette, the *Naiade,* from the Isle of France with a letter from Bussy announcing his departure from there on the 10th December. On the 1st March de Suffren sent de Moissac by the same corvette to the Coromandel Coast to inform Tipu of the imminent arrival of Bussy's expeditionary force.[2] The expeditionary force had in fact gone to Achin in the expectation of meeting de Suffren there, and from Achin it came back to Trinkomali where it arrived on the 10th March. At long last de Suffren was relieved of his extreme anxiety, and being joined by de Peinier's division of three ships of the line and a frigate he could look forward with some equanimity to the prospect of an encounter with the combined English forces under Hughes and Bikerton, although yet superior to his own.[3]

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[1] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren,* pp. 225-226.

[2] *Ibid.,* pp. 230-231.

[3] *Ibid.,* pp. 232-233.

CHAPTER X

THE FRENCH ARMY IN THE CARNATIC

I. *The inactivity of the French army.*

In order to present a connected narrative we have carried the story of French naval operations in Indian waters till the arrival of Bussy at Trinkomali in March 1783, without making any mention of French military activities in south India since the landing of troops under Duchemin at Cuddalore in March 1782. It is time, however, that we interrupt the course of the narrative of de Suffren's glorious exploits and trace the history of French military operations till the arrival of Bussy in India in March 1783. This story presents a striking contrast to the one just narrated. While in the course of one year de Suffren had encountered the English fleet on four occasions, had captured Trinkomali, the finest port that a navy could have in Indian waters, and had raised the prestige of France in the eyes of the Indian Powers to a point never before reached except during the time of Dupleix, the French army under Duchemin remained totally inactive for the whole period, taking little practical part in the military operations of Haidar Ali in the Carnatic, and the only tangible achievement it could show was the capture of Cuddalore, defended by only a very small garrison. For this lack of enterprise and failure to take advantage of the English distress in the Carnatic, responsibility has been thrown largely on Duchemin by both English and French historians, who condemn him in the severest terms. Malleson has even gone to the length of stating categorically that any one of the three thousand troops Duchemin had under him would have made a better general.[1] It will be our endeavour here to trace the course of events in some detail to find out how much Duchemin really deserved this condemnation, and how much he was restricted by difficulties over which he had no control and by the initial lack of a full understanding with an ally without whose co-operation no military operation was possible. It is not of course the purpose of a historian to deliberately paint black as white, but it is undoubtedly his duty to analyse all the facts of a situation to arrive at a correct appreciation of the causes of success or failure.

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[1] Malleson—*Final French Struggles in India*, p. 29.

The appointment of Duchemin to command the first expeditionary army in India was rather unfortunate, since he was a sailor and not a soldier, having no experience of land warfare. His long stay in the Isle of France had accustomed him to a life of ease and comfort; his health was failing and unable to bear the strain of an active campaign. The first expeditionary force of less than 3,000 men, organised mainly by the initiative and efforts of Souillac, Governor of the Isle of France, and not by the French Government, was intended merely as a preliminary enterprise, to prepare the ground for the principal expeditionary force under Bussy which was expected to reach India by the middle of 1782; and it was only as a temporary and stop-gap arrangement that Duchemin took the command. That really determined Duchemin's policy in India, a policy marked by a lack of that enterprise to be expected of the commander of an expeditionary force. As he understood it, his task was only to establish a solid base in India to facilitate the landing of the principal expeditionary force under Bussy, and to enter into a close alliance with Haidar Ali, so that the main force under Bussy could go into operation immediately after landing. Like most others, including Bussy, who submitted *mémoires* to the French Government on the subject of military operations in India, Duchemin thought that if the French were to strike, they should strike with a large and effective force which could assure success. Operation by a small force was considered useless for the main purpose in view, the destruction of the English power in India; and in keeping with the views generally held in France Duchemin was not inclined to undertake any large-scale enterprise till the arrival of Bussy, expected by the middle of 1782.[1]

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[1] Duchemin had also positive instructions from Souillac not to risk his small force in any major operation till the arrival of Bussy. "Your corps, Monsieur, will be so considerably reduced that it will not be at

It is not for that general policy that Duchemin can be condemned. He is to be condemned rather for his failure to realise the weakness of the English position in the Carnatic and to depart from the general policy at opportune moments to take advantage of the enemy's distress.

II. *Landing of troops under Duchemin.*

It was on the 10th March 1782 that the expeditionary force under Duchemin was landed at Porto Novo, the place having been selected at the wishes of Haidar Ali. The French force consisted of 2,868 men, belonging to the regiments of Austrasie and the Isle of France and to the legion of Lauzun.[1] Prior to disembarkation and after the naval action off Madras, de Suffren had suggested to Duchemin a surprise attack on Negapatam, but the latter objected and preferred to effect a landing under safer conditions. It will be remembered that long before the despatch of the expeditionary force from the Isle of France, Souillac had entered into communication with Haidar Ali through the French agent at his Court, Piveron de Morlat, but all hopes of cementing an alliance were destroyed by the ignominous flight of d'Orves from the Coromandel Coast in 1781, leaving Haidar alone to fight with the English. From that time Haidar came to entertain a deep distrust of the French, which coloured his future relations with that nation and prevented him from entering into a solid and whole-hearted alliance.

When de Suffren and Duchemin arrived at Porto Novo on the 21st February 1782, their first task was to resume the threads of negotiations with Haidar, who was campaigning victoriously in the Carnatic, and whose son, Tipu, had just won a striking success in Tanjore, capturing an English detach-

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all possible to hazard large-scale operations, and further you will be conforming yourself to the intention of His Majesty, who desires that no risk be taken before the arrival of all the forces that he has decided to send out."—Letter of Souillac to Duchemin, dated 18th January 1782 (H. de Closets d'Errey—*Précis Chronologique de l'histoire de l'Inde Française, 1664-1814*, p. 50).

[1] Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, p. 85; *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren* gives an inaccurate figure, 2500, p. 64.

ment under Braithwaite.[1] Haidar on his side was glad at the prospect of the assistance of a French expeditionary force. So he hastened to send Piveron de Morlat to welcome de Suffren and Duchemin at Porto Novo and ordered the Governor of Chidambaram to protect the disembarkation of French troops against any attacks by the English garrison of Cuddalore.[2] After the visit of Piveron de Morlat on the 25th February two senior officers, de Moissac and de Canaple, were sent on behalf of de Suffren and Duchemin to compliment the Nawab and to prepare the ground for opening negotiations.[3] They returned on the 7th March with an encouraging reply, and immediately after the French started the landing of troops, munitions and artillery.[4] As yet, however, no definite understanding had been reached about the nature and terms of co-operation between the two allies. After disembarkation French officers were again sent to Haidar's camp to draw up the exact terms of alliance, but from the first the effect of Haidar's distrust of the French became apparent and he tried to evade the question of a formal alliance. Negotiations dragged on for a long time, and it was with deep regret that de Suffren left Porto Novo to seek the English fleet for a second encounter.

III. *Relations with Haidar (March-July, 1782).*

The early relations with Haidar Ali are so important for a correct appreciation of the difficulties and failings of Duchemin that it is worth while tracing their course in some detail. That will help us to determine how much the condemnation made by Malleson and even by Bussy was really deserved, and how much it was due to a lack of understanding of the peculiarities of the situation in which Duchemin was placed. Not that Duchemin was a hero and failed only as a victim of circumstances. In fact, with more courage and intrepidity he could have obtained a few successes over the English at the beginning, and that would have evoked the admiration and confidence of Haidar, which would have gone a long way in getting from him that whole-hearted co-operation which the French had expected. But it should not be overlooked that Duchemin's instruction was first to enter into a definite treaty of alliance with Haidar, the terms of which had been laid down by Souillac himself. According to these terms the French were to offer military assistance to Haidar and conquer the Carnatic for him, and in return Haidar was to bear all the expenses of the French army, besides allowing the French to retain a few English towns, including Madras.[1] It was not unnatural therefore for Duchemin to try to get these terms accepted by Haidar first, before undertaking any military enterprise. It was in fact all the more necessary, since the problems facing him on landing, lack of funds, of provisions and of transports, could not be solved without such a definite treaty of alliance. On the other hand, Haidar was irritated at the insistence of Duchemin on the conclusion of a formal treaty before undertaking any military enterprise. The desertion of d'Orves in 1781 had made him too distrustful of the French to be willing to enter into a formal treaty of alliance with them before having some concrete proof of their earnestness and courage. It was this fundamental difference which influenced the conduct of the French expeditionary force. While in order to obtain the expenses of military operations in India from Haidar the French tried to make out that they had come only to serve his interests, Haidar was shrewd enough to understand that they had come in their own interests as well, and must therefore give proof of their ability and enterprise before they should be given any assistance. That also explains the difference in his attitude towards de Suffren and Duchemin.

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[1] Wilks—*History of Mysoor*, II, p. 109.

[2] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren*, *pp.* 101-102.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 103.

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[1] There is a detailed criticism of the terms by the Minister of Marine and Colonies in his letter to Souillac dated 10th April 1782. A. N.: Ministère des Colonies, C-2, Vol. 153, p. 148. Marquis de Castries did not like any premature agreement on the division of the spoils of victory and he particularly objected to the article by which the French were to acquire some additional territories to be conquered from the English. It was, he declared, going against the wishes of the King, who wanted the liberation of the Indian Princes from the yoke of the English and not making any territorial conquests. It was necessary to avoid giving the impression to the Indian Princes that the French only wanted to take the place of the English. Castries also did not like the peremptory demand made by Souillac to maintain the independence of the French army from the control of the Mysore ruler. Such a tone betrayed distrust of Haidar and was bound to displease him. Finally, he did not favour the demand, as an essential condition of the treaty, for an advance of 24 lakhs of rupees by Haidar.

About the condition of the French army after disembarkation at Porto Novo and the course of negotiations with Haidar Ali, there are two interesting letters, both dated 22nd March 1782, written by two soldiers, and also a *mémoire* by de Canaple, who, along with de Chenneville, had been sent by Duchemin to negotiate with Haidar. The first of these letters stated that the troops were landed at Porto Novo on the 11th and were supplied with necessary provisions by Haidar. On the 19th Duchemin sent two envoys to the Nawab, de Chenneville (Duchemin's brother) and de Canaple. "Until their return we do not know what to do. However, we have made a depot at Chalembron for our own artillery, baggages and hospitals ..... Bader (Haidar) has his camp about ten leagues from Pondicherry. We are only waiting for transport to carry our things to the depot at Chalembron ..... Happily Tipousaeb, the son of the Nawab, arrived here at last on the 16th. He is encamped at three kosh from Porto Novo; as a result the depot will be protected if we make any movement". The writer then referred to the state of indiscipline among the ranks and the mutual jealousy among the officers. Some sepoy troops were recruited and placed under the command of d'Houdelot and Boissieux, but they were only a famished and untrained rabble. "From where shall we start our operations? It is said from Cuddalore. But it is better to say that one does not know what is to be done. The Nawab does not like any movement without his orders ..... We are waiting impatiently for the return of our last ambassadors. In the meantime the Nawab has sent provisions and a lakh of pagodas". After referring to an interview between Tipu and Duchemin when the former enquired whether Bellecombe would be returning to India shortly, the writer stated, "I report this incident to prove that M. Duchemin is believed here to have come only in temporary command of the army."[1]

The second letter, written by a son to his father in the

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[1] *Journal de Bussy*, pp. 107-111.

Isle of France, was similar. "The army was disembarked on the 10th of this month and the disembarkation of the artillery is in progress. Yesterday the siege artillery was dragged to Chalembron, the most convenient place for a depot". The writer then referred in a most feeling way to the devastations of the neighbouring countryside made by Haidar's army. "MM de Chenneville, Piveron and Canaple started on the 18th for the camp of Haidar. Nobody knows the object of their mission. I believe that on their return we shall start on our march for capturing Cuddalore. This fort is commanded by a Lieutenant-Colonel and has a garrison of 60 or 80 white troops and some sepoys. It appears that from there we shall move to Tanjore to capture the few towns preserved by the English..... The Nawab has sent a lakh of rupees merely on the receipt of the general. I do not know if he will continue his generosity". The writer concluded by referring to the campaign of mutual villification by some of the high-ranking officers.[1]

The *mémoire* of de Canaple[2] gives a detailed account of French relations with Haidar from the landing of troops at Porto Novo in March to de Suffren's meeting with the Mysore ruler in July. After the arrival of the French at Porto Novo in February, de Canaple and de Moissac were sent in company with Piveron de Morlat to the camp of Haidar. They had instructions to recall to Haidar the past promises he had made to gain the military assistance of the French and to ask him to conclude a definite treaty of alliance. De Canaple observed that this insistence on a formal treaty before the commencement of military operations was indiscreet on the part of the French and was the fundamental source of all the later difficulties that beset them. "The Nawab replied to this address only in a vague way, assured M, de Piveron that he would furnish all the supplies required by the army, and added that such an important treaty could not be concluded except between him and M. Duchemin. He also gave orders to his Treasurer to send a lakh of rupees to the French army at Porto Novo.....". Next day he gave the French envoys leave to depart in a *Darbar* ceremony, where the *Wakils* of the Maratha Court and also of Nizam Ali were present. In order to impress these *Wakils* and to prevent their masters from entering into a treaty with the English, Haidar had previously prepared a speech to be delivered by the French envoys to the effect that the King of France had declared war on England to avenge the capture of Pondicherry and to free the Indian Powers from the yoke of the English.

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[1] *Journal de Bussy*, pp. 111-113.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 114-125.

After the return of the French envoys, the troops, munitions and artillery were landed from the ships. Haidar was anxious to see the French army commence operations immediately, but the disembarkation and the transport of guns along sandy roads naturally caused some delay, and in the meantime Duchemin sent two envoys again, his own brother de Chenneville and de Canaple, to the camp of Haidar Ali "in order to conclude the treaty of alliance which his instructions urged upon him peremptorily". The envoys tried to persuade Duchemin to agree to some modifications of the terms, but the latter replied that his instructions left him no discretion to alter them. Haidar Ali on his side felt irritated at the "French General occupying himself with negotiations, when it was necessary to commence operations to take advantage of the consternation in the English army, and among the citizens of Madras. He made some indirect remarks on the subject to M. de Chenneville, who tried to make the Prince understand the necessity forcing Duchemin to that conduct."

Negotiations were started between the French envoys and three Brahmin agents of the *Darbar*. Haidar agreed to all the French terms which related to the distribution of territories yet to be conquered, but when the question of the pay of the French army came up, he flatly refused to give more than a lakh of rupees per month for 3,000 Europeans and wanted an official list of all the officers and men together with their salaries. This demand amounted clearly to a suspicion of the good faith of the French General, whose pretensions about the strength of the army and the expenses required for it were not believed by Haidar. He expressed open derision for the French, and on being told that the latter intended to march against Cuddalore, he simply remarked that it was an easy affair and that if he had known that the French wanted the place he would have asked his son to take it for them on his way to Porto Novo. Finally, the French envoys returned and Haidar sent one of his own agents, Benaji Pandit, to Duchemin with the apparent object of continuing the negotiations.

In the meantime Cuddalore had surrendered to the French at the first summons (8th April).[1] But the place was found to be so unhealthy and diseases had taken such a heavy toll on the French troops that it was decided to encamp the army at Manjakuppam, four miles to the north of the town. The arrival of Benaji Pandit at Cuddalore did not lead to the conclusion of a treaty. The fundamental difference persisted about the amount of money to be paid for the salary of the troops. "The disproportion between our means and our claims daily increased by the reduction of our troops". Another tricky question arose when Haidar demanded that Duchemin must agree to continue the war in India even though peace might be concluded in Europe between France and England. In his anxiety to hasten the conclusion of the treaty Duchemin agreed even to this astounding condition, with some mental reservation that he would wriggle himself out of the obligation when the actual occasion arose. But the treaty was not concluded, and by his action Duchemin had merely played into the hands of Haidar and betrayed his incompetence at negotiations to the shrewd eye of the Nawab. In the meantime the army was reduced to great financial distress and murmurs of discontent increased daily.

De Canaple then continued to give an account of the shabby treatment accorded by Haidar to Duchemin. From Cuddalore the French army moved to Vilnoor near Pondicherry and thence to Permacoil, to join Haidar who was laying siege to that place. Haidar made no move to meet Duchemin, and the French army remained inactive and allowed Permacoil to be taken by the Mysore forces alone. After the fall of Permacoil on the 16th May, Haidar and the French marched towards Wandiwash.[2] It was on the way to Wandiwash that Duchemin was able to meet Haidar for the first time. But far from suggesting concerted efforts, Haidar asked Duchemin to withdraw his army back to its original camp near Pondicherry, as he had received information that Sir Eyre Coote was marching to the relief of Wandiwash. It was a disappointment to Duchemin, particularly as it created the impression that the French fled away precipitately in the face of the English. There was no alternative, however, and the French fell back upon their original position near Pondicherry. Shortly after this retreat Haidar separated himself completely from the French. On the 30th May he moved, without his allies, towards Arnee to forestall a surprise attack by Coote on his principal supply depot in the Carnatic. Nor did he seek the help of the French when after Coote's withdrawal to Madras in June he proceeded to lay siege to Vellore. The French were forced to remain inactive all the while, in great financial distress, and with their commander, Duchemin, lying seriously ill. Relations with Haidar reached a breaking point, when the arrival of de Suffren in July and his interview with the Nawab improved matters to some extent.

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[1] For the capture of Cuddalore see Wilks—*History of Mysoor,* II, pp. 133-134; Love—*Vestiges of Old Madras,* III, p. 240 (letter from Fort St. George to the Company). The English garrison consisted of only 400 sepoys and 5 European artillerymen.

[2] Wilks, *op. cit.,* II, p. 134.

Thus in the *mémoire* of de Canaple we see another version of the conduct of the French army, different from the one usually given by historians, both English and French, who have condemned Duchemin rather severely for his timidity, his refusal to co-operate with Haidar and his failure to take advantage of the weakness of the English army before Wandiwash, when the destruction of that army would have meant the end of the English power in south India.[1] De Canaple, being one of the envoys sent by Duchemin to negotiate with Haidar, may perhaps be accused of having given a rather one-sided picture with the intention of exculpating himself and his chief, Duchemin, of the charges of timidity and inaction, throwing the entire blame on Haidar for his refusal to accept the French terms and the co-operation offered by Duchemin. It is quite possible that de Canaple, being only human, tried to save the face of his countrymen by giving a somewhat coloured version of the relations with Haidar Ali. But, as we shall see later, even persons violently prejudiced against Duchemin and his officers failed to establish conclusively the charge of timidity against them and, on the other hand, agreed that the attitude of Haidar towards the French was neither sincere nor friendly.

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[1] Malleson—*Final French Struggles in India*, pp. 30-31.

When Bussy arrived in the Isle of France in June 1782, he received numerous reports about the bad conduct of Duchemin and his officers. There were two principal charges against them, cupidity and inaction. About the first, Bussy wrote in his *Journal:* "the cupidity shown by the principal officers, beginning with the Chief, must not only be displeasing to him (Haidar) but must also injure the interest of the army in relation to a man like Haidar".[1] Again, " it will be difficult to make Haidar Ali forget the conduct of the General and of some of the principal officers of our army, who by their shameful cupidity have inspired in him the greatest distrust for the entire nation."[2] Bussy stated that the opening of negotiations with the French cost Haidar thirty thousand rupees paid to Duchemin, ten thousand to his brother de Chenneville and two thousand to de Canaple.[3] About the second charge, Bussy wrote to Marquis de Castries from the Isle of France, "You will be very much surprised to learn that the detachment landed under the command of Duchemin has not fired a single shot and has left Haidar Ali to make his own campaigns without offering him any troops. As a consequence, this Indian has conceived as much distrust of him as admiration for Mon. de Suffren, and but for the latter and the news of my arrival in the Isle of France Haidar Ali Khan would have long concluded peace with the English."[4]

IV. *De Launay sent by Bussy to negotiate with Haidar.*

Bussy was so furious at what he came to know about the conduct of the first expeditionary force that shortly after his arrival in the Isle of France he sent de Launay as his personal agent to Haidar, with orders to Duchemin to hand over the command to Hoffelize and return to Colombo. He sent similar orders for the removal of a large number of the principal officers.[1] It was a drastic action prompted by a belief about the bad conduct of these persons. But when de Launay arrived at the camp of Haidar at the end of July and had several interviews with him, he sent a report to Bussy on the 2nd August, in which he made little mention of the bad conduct of the French officers, and on the other hand gave a detailed account of the insincere and unfriendly attitude of Haidar. The officers were removed according to Bussy's orders, but Duchemin, who was lying seriously ill and had already resigned his command to Hoffelize, remained at Cuddalore as the state of his health did not permit him to go to Colombo as directed.[2]

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[1] *Journal de Bussy*, p. 35.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 107.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 113-114.

[4] Malleson—*Les Dernières Luttes des Français dans l'Inde et sur l'Océan Indien*, p. 31 (translator's note).

De Launay arrived at Cuddalore on the 28th July and had his first interview with the Nawab on the 31st. Shortly before that de Suffren had a meeting with Haidar, which because of the high esteem of the Mysore ruler for the brave Admiral improved for the time being his relations with the French army. Haidar complained to de Suffren about the refusal of Duchemin to co-operate with him against the English, justifying his own action in stopping money and provisions for the army; but de Suffren succeeded in persuading him to forget his past bitterness and to agree to continue supplies for the French army. It is doubtful, however, how much de Suffren would have succeeded in overcoming Haidar's antipathy towards the French army, but for the timely arrival of de Launay bringing news of the imminent coming of Bussy with a large expeditionary force.

De Launay sent a detailed report to Bussy on the 2nd August about his interviews with Haidar, which revealed an attitude on the part of the Mysore ruler not very friendly towards the French.[3] It was on the 31st July that de Launay had his first formal interview with Haidar Ali at ten o'clock in the evening. He was accompanied by two high-ranking officers, de Cossigny and d'Espinassy, and an escort of troops given to him by Hoffelize, who had taken the command of the army some time before owing to the illness of Duchemin. After the ceremonial preliminaries de Launay presented to Haidar the letter of Bussy and a portrait of Louis XVI, which was accepted at the *Darbar,* with all standing, including Haidar, and a salute of 21 guns. To Haidar's enquiry about the expected time of Bussy's arrival in India de Launay replied that it would be some time in October, which seemed too far distant to the Nawab. De Launay left the *Darbar* after having been given rich presents worth 3,000 rupees. He had expressed his unwillingness to accept money which Haidar had wanted to present him at first. This incident, a customary thing in an Eastern Court, is interesting, as helping us to understand the real nature of the extortions alleged to have been made by Duchemin, de Chenneville and de Canaple.

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[1] *Journal de Bussy*, pp. 38-40.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 101.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 140-147.

On August 1 de Launay had another meeting with the Nawab in the evening. He read out to Haidar an extract from the instructions of the King of France to Bussy, stating that the Carnatic should belong to Haidar. De Launay declared further that he had been instructed by Bussy to write to the different Princes of India in consultation with Haidar, announcing Bussy's imminent arrival, to which Haidar replied that he would indicate in a few days' time the allies to whom de Launay should write. Haidar showed greater interest about the time of Bussy's arrival, and he urged de Launay to write to him to hasten his departure from the Isle of France.

De Launay felt rather disappointed at the attitude of Haidar. "He seemed to me to be quite tired of the war, and the English were always in correspondence with him."[1] De Launay referred to a letter written by Sir Eyre Coote some time before with the object of detaching Haidar from his connection with the French, in which Coote painted the French national character in the darkest colour. This letter was not without some effect on Haidar, as became evident when in a moment of anger, on the report of one of his men having been killed by a French soldier at Pondicherry, he read out Coote's letter to Piveron de Morlat and observed bitterly that he could never expect any good out of the French connection, and that the French were "a nation—frivolous, without character, and never keeping promises or faith when opposed to their interests". To de Launay Haidar spoke in appreciative terms of the character of Duchemin but referred to the army under him in the most derisive fashion. "What can be done with at most a thousand Europeans that you have at Cuddalore in a position to march, and even these hardly in a condition to make rapid marches?..... How can troops like them be opposed to those of the English who are always maintained in a perfect state and are able to march in one day what we could scarcely do in three?" Haidar definitely refused to plan any concerted military operations before the arrival of Bussy and urged de Launay repeatedly to write to Bussy to come as promptly as possible.

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[1] For the abortive negotiations started by Sir Eyre Coote see Secret Select Committee Proceedings, Fort William, 26th August 1782 (Forrest—*Selections from Letters, Despatches etc., Foreign Department, Government of India,* III, pp. 885-895).

In his report to Bussy de Launay described the miserable plight of the French army at Cuddalore, which lay entirely at the mercy of Haidar. The latter could at any moment reduce it to starvation by refusing to supply money or by leaving the Carnatic for the Malabar Coast, as he was actually contemplating, in which case the English could capture Cuddalore with ease. In a postscript de Launay referred to Haidar's agent with the French army, Benaji Pandit, who had been in the pay of the English for fifteen years, and who was employed by Haidar deliberately to keep the door open for a compromise with the English. De Launay told this agent that he strongly resented the disparaging remarks made by Haidar about French troops, and asked him to communicate it to his master. It produced some effect on Haidar, who invited de Launay to the *Darbar* next evening to meet three Maratha *Wakils* just arrived from Poona. At the *Darbar* he handed over a draft, on the model of which de Launay was to write to Nana Phadnavis, and in order to impress the Maratha *Wakils* he asked de Launay to repeat all that he had said before about the intentions of the King of France with regard to Indian Princes and about the strength of the expeditionary force under Bussy. The *Wakils* expressed great admiration for Bussy, recalling his past exploits, and urged de Launay to write to him to come without any loss of time.

V. *Death of Duchemin—defence of his conduct.*

The letter of de Launay throws sufficient light on the relations between Haidar and the French army and explains the inactivity of the latter as against the general condemnation of historians passed on Duchemin. In fact, the position of Duchemin was far from enviable. With barely 1,000 European troops fit for service, with no money and provisions, with the principal officers constantly quarrelling and intriguing, with no support or co-operation from Haidar, and finally with definite instructions from Souillac not to risk the small force in any encounter with the English before the arrival of Bussy, Duchemin could hardly be expected to work miracles and destroy the English power in south India. It was indeed fortunate for Duchemin that he did not live long to suffer the distress of an intolerable situation, and soon death came to him as a relief. He had been lying seriously ill since June and breathed his last on the 12th August.[1]

There is an interesting letter from Duchemin's secretary, Robillard, to Souillac, dated 18th August. Robillard wrote that on his death-bed Duchemin had one regret only, that he had not been able to explain the difficulties of his position in detail to Souillac, and that was why he asked his secretary to communicate his feelings to Souillac after his death. The first difficulty against which Duchemin had to contend was the spirit of jealousy and intrigue among his officers. The second difficulty was lack of money. Duchemin had been condemned by some for not having fortified Pondicherry in preparation for the arrival of Bussy, but none cared to enquire where the money was to come from for such an enterprise. Then again, he had been criticised for not having left the Coromandel Coast and gone to Trinkomali to secure a base there, but his critics overlooked the effect it would have produced on the future course of the war. Haidar would have concluded peace with the English, and Bussy on his arrival would have found no landing base on the Coromandel Coast. Finally, Duchemin was reproached with timidity in keeping his army inactive at Cuddalore, but what could he do in the face of the following letter from Souillac, dated 18th January 1782? "Your corps will be so much reduced in effective strength that it will scarcely be possible to take the risk of any large-scale operations, and in avoiding such operations you will be conforming to the intention of His Majesty, who desires that no risk be taken before the arrival of all the forces that it has been decided to send." Duchemin could have justified his conduct by disclosing this letter to others, but he thought it prudent to keep it secret. Robillard concluded his letter thus: "These are the things which Duchemin charged me to inform you so that you may pass your judgment on the criticisms which you must have heard against him."[1]

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[1] Letter of Montvert from Cuddalore—*Journal de Bussy*, p. 149; *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, p. 174; Roux gives the date of Duchemin's death as 13th September (*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, p. 160) and Malleson repeats it (*Final French Struggles in India*, p. 57). But the first two sources are obviously more reliable on this point.

VI. *Hoffelize taking command of the French army—Relations with Haidar (July-November 1782).*

Duchemin was succeeded in command of the army by Comte d' Hoffelize, Colonel of the Regiment of Austrasie. He was an abler general, of cool and calculating temperament and of sober judgment. But even he could do nothing to improve relations with Haidar, and the French army continued to remain inactive at Cuddalore, without money and provisions and with increasing discontent among the ranks. It will be remembered that Haidar was engaged in the siege of Vellore when he hastened to the coast to meet the valiant French Admiral, de Suffren, towards the end of July. He remained near Cuddalore till the middle of August for negotiations with de Launay. Then on the news of Sir Eyre Coote having marched from Madras to relieve the garrison at Vellore, Haidar hastened back for that place. But Coote had preceded him by unexpectedly rapid marches, and after supplying provisions to the besieged garrison had withdrawn to Madras before Haidar could arrive. The latter then continued the siege, directing operations from Arcot.

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[1] *Journal de Bussy*. pp. 287-289.

While he was thus engaged in the siege of Vellore and his son campaigning far south in Tanjore, the small French army at Cuddalore lay fully exposed to a surprise attack. Coote, desirous of taking advantage of the isolated position of the French, planned to make a rapid march along the coast and take Cuddalore by surprise before Haidar could come to its rescue. It was a brilliant stroke and would have surely succeeded, but for the news of the naval action off Trinkomali on the 3rd September and the heavy damage inflicted on the English fleet. Starting quietly from Madras, Coote hastened along the coastal route and on the 6th September encamped near Pondicherry, just a day's march from Cuddalore. He expected the support of the fleet and waited for siege artillery to come up before proceeding further. But on the 11th he received the unexpected news that Trinkomali had been taken by the French and the English fleet had returned to Madras in a badly damaged condition. That at once compelled him to abandon his plan and hurry back to Madras to cover it against a surprise attack by Haidar's forces.[1] There was, indeed, reason for grave anxiety about the safety of Madras. The fleet was badly damaged, the garrison inadequate in number, and the neighbouring countryside desolated by one of the worst famines recorded. If Coote's communication with Madras could have been cut off, the fate of that city would have hung in the balance. Fortunately for the English, no combination was possible between Haidar and the French. Hoffelize indeed proposed to Haidar a combined attack on Coote, but it was declined, and thus one of the best opportunities was allowed to slip away.

In a letter to Souillac dated 17th October 1782, Hoffelize wrote, "I made every possible attempt, when the English had advanced against Cuddalore, to persuade the Nawab to take them by the rear, to order Tipu to join me and then to march in concert against the enemy. That movement would have compelled him to attack at a disadvantage or to lay down arms. But nothing could persuade the Nawab. I sent M. de Boissieux to him for that purpose, but he told him repeatedly that he did not want to undertake any enterprise before the arrival of reinforcements to us, and that we were too weak, in view of the troops that we had lent to the squadron."[1] In the same letter Hoffelize also wrote about the miserable condition of the army and the way it was treated by Haidar. "The Nawab does not want to give any more money. He has supplied only five lakhs since our landing, and salaries are in arrears for five months. I am afraid that in the end he will refuse us even provisions. He considers as rather abnormal the expenses of the administration and of hospitals, and he asks whether the white eat more than the black."

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[1] Wilks—*History of Mysoor*, II, p. 149.

An account of the plight of the army for lack of funds is also contained in another letter, dated 21st October, and written by Mottais de Narbonne who was in charge of the finances. Mottais wrote that if funds were not forthcoming immediately, desertions which had already begun would increase rapidly. The Nawab had stopped payment altogether, but Mottais had urged de Suffren who had great influence over him to write to him for money. Even if the letter had some effect, Mottais did not think that Haidar would pay more than a lakh or two, which would be wholly insufficient, and he therefore implored Souillac to send money as promptly as possible to enable the army to subsist till the arrival of Bussy, which could not be expected before the beginning of 1783.[2]

VII. *Death of Haidar—Relations of the French army with Tipu (December 1782—March 1783).*

Fortunately for the French, they were left undisturbed by the English for a few months after the frustration of their projected attack on Cuddalore in September. The English army withdrew to Madras, and Sir Eyre Coote, who was in bad health, returned to Bengal to spend the winter there, leaving the command to General Stuart. Operations in the Carnatic remained suspended till the beginning of the next year. In the meantime Haidar died on the 7th December and was succeeded by his eldest son, Tipu. His death was caused by a malignant abscess on the neck which defied all medical treatment.[1] Shortly before his death he had asked Hoffelize to send him some French doctors, and the latter sent Rochard, the chief physician, and Noel, the chief surgeon of the army. An immediate operation was deemed necessary, but Haidar postponed it for three days to wait for the auspicious moment fixed by his astrologers. This loss of time proved fatal, and the operation, when made, was too late to save his life.[2]

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[1] *Journal de Bussy*, pp. 289-290.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 290-292.

The news of Haidar's death was kept a close secret till the succession of his eldest son, Tipu, was assured. The latter was at the time engaged in campaigning on the Malabar Coast in the neighbourhood of Paniani against an English force under Col. Macleod.[3] There were ambitious chiefs in Haidar's army who wanted to take advantage of the situation to divide the territories and riches of their dead master among themselves, even going to the length of seeking the help of the English. Such a chaotic development, which would have injured beyond repair the prospect of the expected French expedition under Bussy, was prevented by the prompt and courageous action of the small French contingent in Haidar's army led by Bouthenot and Poulet, and by the rapid march of Hoffelize with his troops to the neighbourhood of Haidar's camp. Thus it was through the efforts of the French that order was maintained in the late Nawab's army, and the ambitious chiefs were held in restraint till the arrival of Tipu and his quiet succession.[4] It was a repetition of an old incident, when Bussy in similar circumstances had assured the succession of Salabat Jang to the rulership of the Deccan.

Although Haidar had not shown himself very friendly towards the French, his sudden death was a material loss to them, since his successor, Tipu, was even less favourably inclined. Nor did the latter inherit the military genius and political acumen of his father. Piveron de Morlat, the French agent at the Court of Haidar, gives the following interesting impression about the difference between the father and the son in a letter to de Suffren, dated 9th February 1783. "Although Tipu Sultan seems desirous of following the projects of his father and of remaining an ally, he has neither the ability nor the genius, nor the military talents of the late Nawab..... Haidar Ali Khan was the most extraordinary Prince that had ever appeared in Asia. He had formed his vast estates out of nothing by sheer force of arms. By his genius he was able to preserve them till the end, and when he died he was a terror to the whole of India and to the English nation...... Tipu Sultan has suddenly inherited all these vast possessions, immense treasures and a large army, which have made him very arrogant. Would to God he may know how to preserve these advantages so long as we may have need of him! The late Nawab was, moreover, a sincere friend of the French; he had given convincing proofs of it till his last moments. He reposed great confidence in me and gave me publicly marks of his kindness everyday....... Tipu Sultan knows well my relationship with the late Nawab and his good-will for me, so that he treats me with much honour and kindness; but when it comes to business, what a difference in genius, foresight, action and manner of government between him and the great man who is no more."[1]

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[1] Wilks—*History of Mysoor*, II, p. 167.

[2] Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, p. 171.

[3] Wilks, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 163-166.

[4] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Indè*, pp. 221-222; Roux, *op. cit.*, pp. 171-172.

Wilks, however, gives the entire credit of securing the quiet succession of Tipu to two Hindu officers of Haidar, Poornea and Kishen Row, and minimises the part played by the French.—*History of Mysoor*, II, pp. 168-172.

The death of Haidar and succession of Tipu was followed by a change in the course of the war in south India. Down to the end of 1782 it was Haidar who was always on the offensive. His original possessions were safe because of the preoccupation of the Bombay Government with the Maratha war, so that he was allowed to harry and devastate with impunity the rich province of the Carnatic and hit the English at their most vulnerable point. But from the end of 1782 there came about a great change. The arrival of Bikerton with his squadron considerably strengthened the English fleet. The Maratha war was brought to an end and a definitive treaty concluded. The Bombay Government was thus left free to divert its energies to the Mysore war and to adopt the most effective plan of operations, namely to carry the war to the

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[1] Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*. pp. 168-169.

Malabar possessions of Tipu and thereby force him out of the Carnatic to defend his own dominions. An expeditionary force under Matthews was landed at Rajamundroog at the mouth of the Mirjy, and early in 1783 it captured in quick succession nearly all the strongholds of the Mysore Nawab, Onore, Bednore, Mangalore etc., encouraging all the disaffected elements to rise in revolt against the Nawab's rule.[1]

The news of these startling reverses naturally alarmed Tipu and inclined him to leave the Carnatic and hasten to defend his own dominions. That, however, would have meant the extinction of the small French army at Cuddalore and the loss of the only landing base on the Coromandel Coast for the expeditionary force under Bussy expected to arrive shortly. It was therefore as much important to the French that Tipu should remain on the Coromandel Coast till the arrival of Bussy as it was to Tipu himself to hasten back to his own territories. We have seen already that when the French squadron lay at Porto Novo on its return from Achin, Piveron de Morlat came to meet de Suffren on the 15th February and asked him to write to Tipu to induce him to remain on the eastern coast till the arrival of Bussy. Tipu was to be told not to feel extremely concerned over the temporary loss of his western territories and he was to be assured full military help by the French to reconquer them after the arrival of Bussy's expeditionary force.[2] De Suffren accordingly wrote a pressing letter to Tipu, but it could hardly produce any effect in the face of the rapid successes of the English and the uncertainty of the time of Bussy's arrival.

Shortly before he took his decision to leave the Coromandel Coast, Tipu once formed a project of marching against Wandiwash and encountering the English army under Stuart who had moved to that place to destroy its fortifications. But in spite of all the persuasions of Hoffelize to make a rapid march and draw the enemy to an action, the slow movement of Tipu allowed Stuart sufficient time to withdraw from Wandiwash after completing his work of destruction.[1] Commenting on this affair, Hoffelize wrote to de Suffren on February 23, "I believed for a moment that the Nawab would take a determined and vigorous resolution and that we would at last decide, at little cost, the result of the campaign in this part of the country; but the Nawab is absolutely worthless. He has not the least military conception, and all that I could do was to prevent his flight at the approach of the enemy. The English on their side were very much embarrassed. It appeared so from their destruction of Wandiwash and their withdrawal from the place."

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[1] Wilks—*History of Mysoor*, II, pp. 200-209.

[2] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren*, p. 225.

In the same letter Hoffelize reported that shortly after this incident Tipu took his decision to leave the Coromandel Coast for his western possessions and on the 20th February sent half the army in advance. He also pressed Hoffelize to lend him a body of French troops, and the latter was obliged under the circumstances to give him 600 men belonging to the regiment of the Isle of France under the command of de Cossigny. The French troops started on their march on the 23rd to join the advance party sent by Tipu. Hoffelize was left with barely 600 men, but he got an assurance from the Nawab that he himself with the rest of his army would remain on the eastern coast till the arrival of Bussy. But Hoffelize felt sceptical about the value of the Nawab's assurance. Tipu had decided to send Piveron de Morlat to Trinkomali to hasten the arrival of Bussy, but Hoffelize suspected that it was just a pretext to get Piveron out of the way, so as to be better able to carry on negotiations with the English. The latter had made favourable proposals, which the Nawab had not kept concealed from Hoffelize.[2]

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[1] Wilks—*History of Mysoor,* II, p. 178. Stuart proved to be an unenterprising General. He failed to take advantage of the political uncertainty in the enemy camp following the sudden death of Haidar. He did not begin to move till January (1783) and then merely undertook the destruction of the forts of Caranjoly and Wandiwash to prevent their falling into the hands of Tipu. It was a most hasty action, specially at a time when it was quite apparent that the pressure on the Malabar Coast would inevitably draw Tipu out of the Carnatic.

[2] *Journal de Bussy,* pp. 317-318.

Macartney, Governor of Madras, gave a peace-feeler in February (1783). There was an unofficial exchange of envoys, but the negotia-

No sooner had Tipu sent an advance party with a body of French troops to his western possessions than he began to show his determination to follow them himself with the rest of his army. It became increasingly difficult for the French to persuade him to remain on the Coromandel Coast till the arrival of Bussy. Early in March de Launay came to Trinkomali to report the situation to de Suffren.[1] De Suffren at once sent de Moissac to Tipu to inform him of the imminence of Bussy's arrival and to persuade him to change his mind, but de Moissac could do nothing, as Tipu had already left the Coromandel Coast before he reached Cuddalore. Hoffelize reported the matter to de Suffren in a letter dated 8th March.[2] He could not induce Tipu to change his mind, and all that he could do was to get from him 4,000 sepoys and 8,000 cavalry to co-operate with the French expeditionary force under Bussy. He was told by Tipu that he had given orders to his officers to supply provisions and transports to the French army, but Hoffelize doubted his sincerity and felt that the French could not expect anything from him. Deserted by Tipu all on a sudden and left with a small corps of 600 men, Hoffelize withdrew in the direction of Cuddalore from the neighbourhood of Wandiwash, to wait there for the arrival of Bussy.

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tions proved abortive (Wilks—*History of Mysoor*, II, pp. 254-255). Macartney's move was strongly condemned by the Supreme Government in Calcutta—Sec. Sel. Com. Proc., Fort William, 11th March 1783 (Forrest—*Letters, Despatches etc. Foreign Department, Government of India*, III, pp. 921-923).

[1] *Journal de Bussy*, p. 316 (De Suffren's letter to Bussy, 9th March).

[2] *Ibid*, pp. 325-326.

CHAPTER XI

BUSSY'S EXPEDITION

I. *Bussy's views on India: Mémoire of 1777.*

We have carried the story of French land and naval operations in India down to the arrival of Bussy at Trinkomali in March 1783. At this point it is necessary to stop and turn back to trace the course of events since the first decision of the French Government to send an expeditionary force to India. It will be recalled that even before the outbreak of war between England and France in 1778, the French Government had started giving serious attention to the various schemes of diplomatic alliances and military operations in India submitted by official and non-official agents. The new vigour in French policy, in contrast with the lethargy of the later days of Louis XV, became marked in 1777, when the Minister of Colonies, de Sartine, began to examine seriously the feasibility of putting into execution the plan submitted by Chevalier and Madec, and actually sent out two agents to India, Saint-Lubin and Montigny, to see things at first hand and report. It was about this time that the Minister also sought the opinion of the old hero of the Deccan fame, Bussy, on the practicability of the various schemes submitted. The lengthy reply given by Bussy on that occasion constitutes an important historical document and is highly interesting, as giving us his detached and well-considered views on the possibility of restoring French influence in India long before he was called upon to assume command of an expeditionary force sent for the same purpose.[1] It is worthwhile therefore to notice this reply of Bussy in some detail before taking up the actual story of the despatch of an expeditionary force to India under his supreme command towards the end of 1781.

Bussy began his observations with a scathing criticism of the various schemes submitted for diplomatic alliances and military operations in India. "Most of the *mémoires* and projects relating to our establishments in Asia, which have been presented to the Minister, have been dictated by ignorance, cupidity or the extreme need for some employment, no matter at what price. Only the advantages of a plan or of an expedition are shown without any mention of the difficulties, which are either overlooked or purposely concealed. Without an adequate knowledge of the true politics of Indians, of their diverse interests, and of their manners and customs, these people assume them to be similar to ours, and on that illusory basis they construct a system absolutely unreal." As against the reckless optimism and confidence of the persons who had submitted schemes to the Minister, Bussy struck a note of warning, pointing out the immense difficulties that lay in the way. "We must not cherish any illusion. The re-establishment of our position in India is very difficult, very expensive, and the result doubtful, if sufficient means are not employed. To present this enterprise in any other light is to deceive the King and the Minister." Most of the persons who had submitted plans claimed to speak from local experience, but their knowledge was confined to the geography of the various parts of India, which was much less important than the knowledge "of the different interests of the Asiatic Princes, the intrigues in their *Darbars* or councils, their secret dissensions, their inconstancy, their ever-changing views and projects, their lavish but empty promises, their continuous wars and momentary treaties, the interests which divide or unite them, and the possibility or impossibility of moving them to action either in concert or separately." Bussy then stated that for the guidance of the Minister he was giving a true account of the political conditions in India, based on his own knowledge of the various matters mentioned above.

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[1] B.N.F.Fr. 8985—*Reflèxions de Bussy sur l'Etat des Affaires dans l'Inde* (also published in Martineau's *Journal de Bussy*, pp. 152-172).

It was true that all the Princes of India were tired of English control and were anxious for an opportunity to shake off their yoke, but they would not make any move at all until they saw another European Power taking the field against the common enemy with equal military strength. In the meantime the English were gradually expanding their power in north India. It seemed only a matter of time when they would be able to reduce even the Mughal Emperor to the position of the Nawab of the Carnatic, and that would entail the virtual expulsion of the French from the country. In the Deccan the English had concluded a very favourable treaty with Nizam Ali on the basis of the cession of the Northern Sarkars to them. Nizam Ali was in too uneasy a position because of lack of money and constant fear of Maratha aggression to be of much help to the French. The only way of bringing him to the side of the French was to advance him money and assure him of the restoration of the Carnatic, which originally formed a part of his Viceroyalty.

Another possible ally was his brother, Basalat Jang, who had in his service a well-disciplined French corps of three to four hundred men. "He is soliciting help from us, but in spite of his offers and promises he is in such financial distress that even more than his brother, Nizam Ali, far from being able to supply us money, he is in need of financial help from us." He wanted a body of French troops and in return he agreed to cede the Sarkar of Condavir to the French, but Bussy was of opinion that the possession of Condavir, near Masulipatam under English control and 150 leagues from the Nawab's principal territory, would be inconvenient for the French. Bussy, however, thought it proper to maintain friendly relations with Basalat Jang, who would at least be useful in supplying provisions and pack animals. But he was against the idea of maintaining small contingents with numerous Princes, who might be involved in hostilities among themselves. Moreover, in case France was engaged in large-scale military operations in India, not much effective assistance could be expected from these small contingents in the service of the Indian Princes, and their union with the French expeditionary force would be positively harmful, in spreading the contagion of indiscipline and desertion. The French could expect some help from the Nawabs of Cuddapah, Savanur, Bankapur and Kurnool. The Pathans of those regions constituted first-class fighting material, and with money the French could procure a few thousand horsemen from among them.

About Haidar Ali, Bussy stated that he would have been the principal ally of the French "for his riches and the position of his dominions, if reliance could have been placed on this

Muhammedan, who loves money more than anybody else, and thinks of nothing but his own interests, to which he is prepared to sacrifice everything." However, it was necessary to keep him friendly, since he would be positively dangerous as an enemy. As regards Muhammad Ali, Nawab of the Carnatic, who was completely under the control of the English, it was quite possible through secret negotiations to win him over to the French side by an assurance of restoring him to full sovereignty over the Carnatic. One great difficulty for the French in winning over Nizam Ali, Basalat Jang, Haidar Ali and Muhammad Ali to their side was that all of them coveted the possession of the Carnatic, and it would be bad faith to promise the same thing to all. But through skilful negotiations it was not impossible to find out some accommodation among them, specially if the French assured full support to the ambitions of the first three Princes in other directions.

The Power whose alliance would be most valuable to the French was the Maratha Confederacy. "The Maratha nation to-day dominates the whole of the Mughal Empire. I had predicted this predominance as early as 1753, as also the decadence of the Mughals in the south of the peninsula, as may be ascertained clearly from my correspondence with Dupleix. Since then I advised preference for an alliance with the Marathas to that with Muslims. Such a policy deserves all the more attention on our part, since one of the principal chiefs of the Marathas is seeking our alliance and their own interests seem to accord well with ours. It is all the more important to attach the Marathas to us, since if they went against us it, would be difficult for us to procure all the supplies necessary for the success of our operations." Bussy was in favour of an alliance with the Marathas only for political and military reasons and not commercial. The Marathas being a community of only warriors and cultivators, there was little scope for trade and commerce in their dominions. The principal interests of the Marathas, where they came in conflict with the English, were to free the Raja of Tanjore, one of their race, from the yoke of the English, and to levy *Chouth* in the Carnatic, the Orissa Coast and in general in all the territories under English control. By giving definite assurances on these matters, the French could without much difficulty attach the Marathas to their side. The Marathas were divided into two sections, the principal group living near the Malabar Coast and the other belonging to Berar and Cuttack. It was from the former that the French had received some overtures for an alliance, and Bussy advised the opening of immediate negotiations. The first thing to be done to win over the Marathas was to give a solid assurance about the levying of *Chouth* in all the territories to be conquered from the English.

An alliance with the Marathas was absolutely necessary, since it would provide the French the most convenient point for starting their operations against the English. "Either in order to find a base of operations, Pondicherry being of no use for the purpose, or forced by other circumstances, it may so happen, it may even be more advantageous to begin our operations on the Malabar Coast, by landing our forces in the neighbourhood of Bombay so as to be able to be quickly joined by the Marathas of that region............Bombay could be captured from the English even before our junction with the Marathas. This success.........would decide all the Powers in our favour, besides giving us an excellent base for our troops as well as for our fleet................From there our army will march with the Maratha allies towards the Coromandel Coast, collecting on the way the contingents of several small chiefs, Muslim and Maratha, and specially of Basalat Jang. The whole will constitute a formidable army with which to invest Madras. Through a combined move our fleet will also arrive there at the same time. It may be confidently expected that the investment of the town from all sides will assure us victory."

An alliance with the other group of Marathas, namely of Berar and Cuttack, would also be of great use to France if she "accepted the offer, made by the Emperor of Delhi, of the occupation of Tatta. From there it would be easy (if the journey be at all practicable) to join our forces with those of the Emperor with the object of making a joint attack on the English (in Bengal) and putting them between our combined forces and those of the Marathas (of Berar and Cuttack)." But about the feasibility of the Tatta project Bussy felt quite diffident. In the first place, the French would have to acquire the province of Tatta by force of arms, which would entail a huge expenditure, since no revenue could be expected from the territory till the conquest was complete. In the second place, from Tatta about 1,000 French troops would be despatched to Delhi to join the Emperor. But this number, reinforced by 4,000 sepoys as suggested by Madec and Chevalier, would be wholly inadequate in a war with the English. In the third place, the troops despatched to Delhi were likely to be employed in operations against the recalcitrant vassals of the Emperor, who was more interested in consolidating his position round Delhi than in sending an expedition to distant Bengal. Bussy therefore suggested that France should ally herself with those Powers who would give her effective help to achieve a quick victory, rather than embark on an enterprise where success was so distant and uncertain. At the same time he advised that the offer of the Emperor should not be rejected straightway. On the other hand, the Emperor should be kept favourably inclined with an encouraging reply.

For success in the projected expedition to India, two things were of fundamental importance: first, diplomatic negotiations must precede military operations; and second, the French expeditionary force must arrive in India in sufficient strength and with adequate money and munitions so as not to be dependent on the assistance of any Indian ally from the beginning. "The more we have been humiliated in this part of the world, the more indispensable it is, if we come back here with the intention of re-establishing ourselves, to be in a position when our alliance would be sought by others rather than us begging for their assistance; to be their protector instead of being their protégé . . . . . It is infinitely better not to make any attempt than to do it in a half-hearted way." As regards the details of military operations in India, Bussy did not like to fix any definite plan in advance. "In Asia the scene is so quickly changing that the interests of the Powers and the state of affairs vary from day to day. Thus operations must be guided by the actual circumstances at the time."

Bussy ended his *mémoire* with a warning that whether the English met with success or failure in north America, "they are sure to turn their attention to India and send stronger forces there in order to consolidate their position and to compensate themselves either for the loss of their American colonies or for the expenses incurred in subjugating them; and that will be the end for ever of all our hopes of establishing our position in India." He therefore urged upon the Minister the necessity of seizing the opportunity offered by the American war and striking against the English power in India without any loss of time.

II. *Bussy's appointment to command the expeditionary force: Mémoire of 1781.*

We have noticed the views of Bussy, expressed in 1777, regarding the possibilities of French military operations in India and the factors necessary for success. It cannot be definitely ascertained what impression Bussy's *mémoire* produced on the Minister, and whether he had been tipped from that time to take the command of the expeditionary force proposed to be sent out to India. The thing was that although the French Government seemed to have been seriously contemplating the adoption of one or other of the various plans submitted for military operations in India, nothing came out in a concrete form, and its policy continued to be vacillating and half-hearted. When hostilities broke out between England and France early in 1778, not only had France taken no decision about the despatch of an expeditionary force, even the ordinary precautions about the safety of her Indian possessions had been neglected, with the result that within a few months all of them fell into the hands of the English, and the French did not have a single landing base in India. Throughout 1779-80 France concentrated all her attention on the American theatre, and it was not till 1781 that she took the decision which she should have taken three years earlier, to send a strong expeditionary force to India. It was only natural that Bussy should have been invited to assume the command of the expeditionary force, as none else in France could claim the same halo of military success in India. No doubt he had grown too old and had been living in France for twenty years in virtual retirement, but nevertheless his very name was expected to appeal to the Indian Princes, whose alliance was necessary for the success of the enterprise.

When the expedition had been decided upon and Bussy had been invited to assume command, he gave expression to his views, in a *mémoire* to the Minister, on the Indian political situation and on his poor chance of success in view of the reduction made by the Minister in the number of troops and the amount of money demanded by him.[1] It is worthwhile analysing this document to know the views of Bussy just on the eve of his departure from France. As in the *mémoire* of 1777, Bussy again severely criticised the irresponsible persons who had represented to the Minister the ease with which the projected Indian expedition could be brought to success. "I have always been surprised and sometimes made furious by the absurd fictions that had been submitted to the Minister both as regards the certainty of an easy success of an expedition undertaken with poor means, and as regards the assistance of every kind that could be expected from Asiatic Powers, considering the promises made by these Indians, false and light-hearted people and friends of hyperbole, who give definite promises about everything, men, money etc., without having the capacity or frequently even the will to keep them. I have therefore no hesitation in stating that the only factors which have prompted these fanciful projects are ignorance, cupidity or the extreme need of getting employment, no matter at what price . . . . ."

Bussy next compared the relative positions of the English and the French in India, in order to bring out clearly the difficulties that lay in the way of the successful execution of any of the projects. "The English possess there large territorial revenues, some very strong forts in all parts of the peninsula, fully provided with all things necessary, a large number of native troops, very well disciplined . . . . . The French are destitute of everything, and the Powers whose alliance we could have counted upon and who are supposed to be at war with our enemies may be at peace with them today." Bussy was referring to the Marathas and Haidar Ali. He then warned that not much help could be expected from the Dutch. "Vexed and humiliated by the English in India for a long time, they yet seem to prefer them to us." The task before the commander of an expeditionary force was very heavy and onerous; it included the subsistence of the army, the formation of alliances, the prevention of intrigues and treacheries quite common in the Indian *Darbars*, the protection of the possessions of the European allies, the planned and concerted conduct of naval and land operations so as to conquer from the English their vast possessions and to assure a peace which would put both the nations on a footing of equality in India. "To present this enterprise as easy and capable of being executed with feeble means is to deceive the King, the Nation and the Ministers."

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[1] The *mémoire* has been published by Martineau as *Preface* to the *Journal de Bussy*, pp. 1-9.

Bussy then repeated what he had stated in 1777, that the French must arrive in India fully equipped for carrying on operations independent of the help of any Indian Prince, as it was then only that their alliance would be eagerly sought by the country Powers. "The more humiliated we have been in this part of the world, the more indispensable is it that we should come back in a state sufficiently imposing to make our alliance desired by the Princes of the country, in place of having to turn to them ourselves or begging for financial help, specially during the earlier stages. It is necessary that we should appear as their protector in place of being their protégé, since in the latter case we are sure to be treated with contempt by nations who base their conduct, their confidence and their esteem entirely on fears or hopes." As an instance of what little financial assistance could be expected from Indian Princes, Bussy pointed out that Najaf Khan had written to Chevalier for an advance of 50 lakhs of rupees to commence operations against the English. The only two Powers who could afford to give financial help to the French were the Marathas and Haidar Ali. But "the former only took and never gave money," and if by accident Haidar agreed to supply money, the French must place themselves under his control and conduct their operations to suit his own interests.

Bussy next gave his opinion about the object that France should set before herself in undertaking the Indian enterprise. It was only to destroy the English power in India, and not to build up a territorial empire for herself. He expressed himself in favour of returning the possessions to be conquered from the English to their original rulers. "By such a policy, worthy of the generosity, greatness and sense of justice of the

King, we shall win as much as possible the gratitude and attachment of the Asiatics and we shall gain allies who may be able to help us to achieve success under the present circumstances." But while advocating the general principle of returning all conquests to their original owners, Bussy urged the importance of retaining some territorial possessions round each French settlement in India in order to procure sufficient revenue for its administrative and military expenses.

For success in the enterprise Bussy had demanded eight to nine thousand troops and ten million livres net to meet the expenses after his arrival in India. The number of troops and the amount of money constituted the barest minimum. The English had the same number of European troops in India, besides 70,000 well-trained sepoys, an element which the French lacked entirely. Bussy also wanted at least equality in naval strength with the English. The Minister, however, decided on considerable reductions both in the number of troops and in the amount of money. In his *mémoire* Bussy gave his replies to the proposals of the Minister, stating definitely that in view of the reductions made, he could not guarantee any success, but could only assure the best possible utilisation of the wholly inadequate means given to him for the Indian enterprise. The Minister proposed to give six to seven thousand men, naval superiority in Indian waters, and absolute authority to Bussy beyond the Cape of Good Hope. Half the sum demanded for the expenses of the operations in India would be paid in cash and the other half in bills drawn on the Dutch Company at Batavia. Bussy replied that after the reductions proposed by the Minister, it would no longer be possible to attack any of the three principal settlements of the English, Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. "Can anybody with six to seven thousand men, without allies and without any base delude himself with the hope of being able to capture places furnished with all kinds of provisions and protected by three thousand Europeans and a large number of sepoys?" Bussy did not like to fix any point of attack or lay down any definite plan of operations in advance, and concluded his *mémoire* by stating that "all that can be promised is to make the best use possible of the means that the Government will be in a position to furnish."

A comparison between the tone of the two *mémoires* of

1777 and 1781 is significant. Although in both of them we notice a keen realisation of the immense difficulties that lay in the way of success, the tone in the second is clearly more diffident than in the first. Specially when the Minister made considerable reductions in the number of troops and in the amount of money demanded, it virtually took away all Bussy's enthusiasm for the project; and when he finally set out for India, he was actuated not so much by an expectation of winning glory as by a sense of duty and a spirit of loyalty to the King. He undertook to lead the expedition with little enthusiasm and little confidence of success.

III. *Royal Instructions to Bussy.*

Before we take up the actual story of Bussy's expedition from the time of his departure for India, it is necessary to notice one more document of importance, namely the *Mémoire of the King* dated 11th November 1781, intended to serve as instructions to Bussy, who was given the official designation of Lieutenant-General and Commander-in-Chief of all the land and naval forces beyond the Cape of Good Hope.[1] The *mémoire* began with a statement of the reasons for the despatch of the expeditionary force. "The formidable power which the English have created in India, the degree of strength which the riches they have acquired in that part of the world have given them in Europe, and finally the necessity of putting limits to the exclusive empire which that nation has specially usurped in the Eastern waters, have determined the King to attack this power in the very centre of the empire it has created."

The *mémoire* next stated the desire of the King to concentrate all authority in the hands of Bussy and to leave him absolute discretion in the conduct of operations. Division of power had led to evil consequences in the past, and in order to avoid them in future the King had decided "to place under the orders of sieur Marquis de Bussy all his possessions, his troops and his squadrons beyond the Cape of Good Hope. His Majesty leaves him full discretion in the matter of operations and of the arrangements to be made; he will be free to employ the land and naval forces at his will and to direct them in a manner which he may consider to be the most suitable for the interest and the glory of the armies of His Majesty. The knowledge which Marquis de Bussy has of the country and the state in which he may find India on his arrival will determine his operations; no fixed line of operations is laid down for him."

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[1] P. A. ms. 330; also B.N.F.Fr. (N.A.), 9433 (p. 64).

The object of the expedition was stated clearly in the *mémoire,* as only liberating the Indian Princes from the yoke of the English and not making any territorial conquest. "Sieur Marquis de Bussy must have been informed that the intention of the King is not to keep the conquests which his forces may make in India. He should make known this generous intention in advance, or at the time of disembarkation, and should declare to the Princes of the country that His Majesty will restore to the original owners the conquests which may be made from his enemies, and that his only object is to weaken the power of the English in India and to establish and preserve an equilibrium which will assure to these Princes the peaceful possession of their states. It is to be hoped that this *démarche* will induce the various rulers to help the execution of His Majesty's views by creating diversions or by some other methods." The *mémoire* next referred to the amount of money and the number of troops given to Bussy for the expedition. A sum of five million livres was paid in cash and an equal amount in bills drawn on the Dutch East India Company. Bussy was given 4,000 troops from France, to be reinforced by another 4,000 from the Isle of France, making a total of 8,000 men. This number was considered adequate, since although the English had a much larger number of troops in India, the total number that they could concentrate at one particular place was not likely to exceed 4,000. As against the sepoy force of the English, the French could expect assistance in men from the Marathas and Haidar Ali.

IV. *Departure from Paris to arrival in the Isle of France.*

Let us now trace the course of events from the time of Bussy's departure from France in November 1781 till his arrival in India in March 1783. Fortunately for us, the task has been rendered quite easy by the existence of two most authentic sources, namely the *Journal de Bussy*, published by Martineau in 1932, and the voluminous correspondence of Bussy preserved in the Pondicherry Archives and forming one of the most important and complete collections of documents there.[1] The *Journal* is a detailed and precise diary of events from day to day, beginning from 13th November 1781 and ending on 31st March 1783. It was written in a style clear and direct, most characteristic of its author, who described the diary in the following terms while sending an extract from it to Marquis de Castries: "It is the depot of my actions, about which I must render account to the King, to his Minister and to the State. It is equally the depot of my thoughts, about which I do not have to render account in the same way, but it is a satisfaction for me to confide them to you."[2]

Bussy left Paris on the 13th November 1781 and travelling via Bayonne and Madrid arrived at Cadiz, where he embarked on the *Saint-Michel* (64) and started for India on the 4th January 1782, accompanied by the *Illustre* (74) and a cutter, the *Lézard* (18). These ships were to have been joined at the island of Teneriffe in the Canaries by a second squadron under de Soulanges, escorting a large number of transport vessels, which had started from Brest on the 10th December. But the English fleet had kept a close watch on Brest, and on the 12th the French squadron was dispersed and forced back to port, 13 or 14 of the transport ships being captured.[3] Unaware of this disaster, Bussy waited at Teneriffe for a few days, 11th to 16th January, and then started for the Cape of Good Hope, where he arrived on the 10th April. He remained there for nearly three weeks to make all necessary arrangements for the proper defence of the colony against any English attack and also to procure provisions. It will be remembered that France had already sent a body of troops under the command of Comte de Conway for the defence of the Cape. At the request of the Dutch Governor, Baron de Plettenberg, Bussy left 1,667 troops there on the understanding that they would be sent to the Isle of France as soon as the immediate threat to the colony was over.[1]

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[1] P. A. mss. 369 to 398 (Bussy's letters before his arrival in India).

[2] *Ibid*, ms. 397—Bussy's letter to Castries, 18th December 1782.

[3] Soulanges once more started in April 1782 but was again forced back to Brest.

It was at the Cape that Bussy came to know of the dispersal of the convoy which had started from Brest on the 10th December. Two of the ships belonging to this convoy, the *Marquis de Castries* and the *Neptune Royal,* arrived at the Cape about the same time, carrying troops and munitions, which were landed, together with two detachments of the regiment of Medoc on board the *Saint-Michel* and the *Illustre,* for the defence of the Dutch colony. In order to meet a deficiency in the number of the crew, the French took 45 Dutch sailors on condition of sending them back from the Isle of France.[2] On the 28th Bussy started from the Cape with his two ships, two transport vessels, and two Dutch vessels, the *Indien* and the *Batavia,* which also accompanied him to the Isle of France. Before his departure he wrote to the Dutch authorities at Batavia and in Ceylon, asking them for five million livres according to the Franco-Dutch arrangement made in Paris. He also left detailed instructions to the French agent at the Cape, Percheron, to make all necessary arrangements for the prompt departure for the Isle of France of the naval division under Peinier which had started from Brest in February and was expected to arrive at the Cape shortly.[3]

V. *Arrival in the Isle of France: Despatch of a personal representative to Haidar and of reinforcements to de Suffren.*

Bussy arrived in the Isle of France on the 31st May. He had learnt, while at the Cape, of the despatch of the first expeditionary force to India under Duchemin. His original intention was to stay in the Isle of France only for a short while and to proceed to the actual theatre of operations without any unnecessary delay. The news he received on his arrival in the Isle of France about India convinced him of the immediate necessity of his presence there. But unfortunately for him, his plan was totally upset by two unforeseen factors; first, his own serious illness which at one time seemed to turn fatal; and second, the long delay in the arrival of troops transported by the convoy under Peinier and then the outbreak of disease among the troops, which sent more than half the number to hospital immediately on arrival. That was why, in spite of the urgency of the Indian situation and much against his will, Bussy was compelled to prolong his stay in the Isle of France till December.

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[1] P. A. ms. 371 (Bussy's letter to Castries, 17th April 1782), ms. 373, (letter to Plettenberg, 18th April).

[2] *Ibid,* ms. 374 (Bussy's letter to Plettenberg, 24th April, 1782).

[3] *Journal de Bussy,* pp. 23-25.

On his arrival in the Isle of France Bussy was informed by Souillac about the development of events in India since the despatch of the first expeditionary force,—the two naval combats engaged by de Suffren, the losses he had sustained and the immediate need in which he stood of reinforcements of men, money and munitions, the inactivity of the army under Duchemin, the greed of the officers and their mutual jealousies and intrigues, and finally the cold relations between Haidar Ali and the French expeditionary force. Souillac was in the midst of making preparations for sending reinforcements to de Suffren when Bussy arrived. While continuing that work, Bussy felt it necessary to take some immediate step to improve the political situation in India by announcing to the country Powers his imminent arrival with a formidable army, and specially by trying to undo the bad impression created in the mind of Haidar by the conduct of the commander and other officers of the first expeditionary force. For that purpose he decided to send de Launay, the *Commissaire* of the army, to India as his personal representative. De Launay's instructions were to proceed to Galle in Ceylon to meet de Suffren, who was expected to be there, and from Ceylon to cross over to the mainland and go to the Court of Haidar Ali, where he was to reside till the arrival of Bussy. De Launay was also to open a correspondence with Montigny at Poona and with all the other French agents in the different courts with a view to put some fresh hope and courage in the minds of the Indian Princes. Bussy also sent orders through de Launay for a wholesale re-organisation of the French army at Cuddalore, recalling a number of officers, including Duchemin, whose bad conduct was supposed to have alienated Haidar Ali.[1] De Launay started from the Isle of France on the 19th June by the cutter, *Lézard*, and we have noticed already his arrival in India, his interview with Haidar Ali, and the reports he sent to Bussy from Cuddalore.

While despatching de Launay mainly for diplomatic work, Bussy also felt it necessary to send some immediate reinforcements to de Suffren, who had sent frantic appeals for help to Souillac from Ceylon. He sent a squadron under d'Aymar, consisting of two ships of the line, the *Saint-Michel* and the *Illustre,* two frigates, the *Consolante* and the *Fortune,* and nine transport vessels carrying 700 troops, munitions and provisions. The squadron started from the Isle of France on the 25th June, and its junction with de Suffren's fleet has been noticed already.[2]

VI. *Bussy's departure for India unavoidably held up.*

In spite of ill-health which began during his short stay at the Cape of Good Hope, the deplorable state of the French expeditionary force under Duchemin and the adverse effect it might produce on the country Powers had led Bussy to think seriously of proceeding to India in person with d'Aymar's squadron; and it was not till the last moment that he finally gave up the idea. The principal factor that induced him not to proceed to India at once was the delay in the arrival of Peinier's convoy. As he wrote in his *Journal,* "It is certain that if I had started from the Isle of France for India with only the two battleships that I had brought with me from Europe, Haidar Ali Khan, the Marathas and all the other Powers of Asia would have thought that there was nothing more to be expected from the French than the five or six hundred men that I would have been able to take with me, in spite of all the assurances that I could give them that I was expecting considerable reinforcements . . . . . They would have believed on the contrary that the six or seven hundred men with whom I would have arrived constituted the utmost efforts that we could make in Europe." Bussy thought it prudent therefore merely "to announce promptly to the Princes of Asia my arrival in the Isle of France, where I was waiting for considerable reinforcements. By that means I would be able to preserve all the advantages that I expect to draw from the desire which they have always expressed for my return and from their hopes of being effectively helped."

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[1] Instructions to de Launay in *Journal de Bussy*, pp. 38-41.

[2] *Journal de Bussy*, p. 53; see also Bussy's letter to Castries for a detailed report since his departure from the Cape of Good Hope, P. A. ms. 380.

Souillac also fully agreed with this view, and in a note to Bussy he wrote, "The essential point is to inspire confidence among the Princes of India; I have been announcing to them since three years back the arrival of large forces from Europe. It was at the instance of Haidar Ali Khan, who was beginning to doubt the sincerity of my promises, that I sent him the major part of the forces that I had in the Isle of France, representing it as merely the advance party (of the principal expeditionary force). This despatch has produced the good effect of putting an end to the waverings of the Prince, who was beginning to be moved by the solicitations of the English. The question now is to preserve and to increase his confidence as well as that of the other Princes. That will come necessarily from the announcement made by Bussy himself that he has arrived in the Isle, from where he is preparing to start immediately with formidable resources." Souillac warned that his arrival in India with inferior means would "lose all the credit attached to the name of M. de Bussy." The second factor which prevented Bussy from starting for India immediately was a violent attack of scurvy, which persisted for the next few months and at one time seemed almost to turn fatal.[1] Bussy has been blamed unduly by some historians for having wasted valuable time in the Isle of France when his presence in India was urgently required, but the reasons stated above give sufficient excuse in his defence.

On the 7th July Bussy came to learn of the arrival of Peinier's convoy at the Cape of Good Hope on the 19th May. From there Peinier had sent a ship, the *Naiade*, in advance to the Isle of France to announce his intention of leaving the Cape about the beginning of July. The captain of the *Naiade* informed Bussy about the widespread outbreak of disease among the soldiers and sailors, which compelled Peinier to land 1,300 sick persons at the Cape. It was a great disappointment for Bussy, who was waiting only for the arrival of Peinier's convoy. A few days later he also learnt that the second convoy, which was to start from Brest in March, was expected at the Cape shortly, but since he had decided to leave the Isle of France immediately on the arrival of Peinier's convoy and had already sent instructions to de Suffren to meet him at Achin, he despatched a corvette, the *Hélène,* to the Cape to conduct the second convoy straight to Achin.[1] On the 29th July there arrived about 1,500 troops, of whom more than a thousand had to be sent straight to hospital.[2] Peinier with the rest of the convoy arrived on the 15th September. The condition of the later arrivals was equally bad, and altogether about 1,800 men had to be kept in hospital.[3] The disease among the troops was mainly scurvy which broke out in an epidemic form and took a heavy toll. It continued in an intense form till November and completely upset all the plans of Bussy, who himself fell so seriously ill as to cause great anxiety about his life.[4] To add to his difficulty, the Governor of the Cape refused to send back the French troops temporarily lent by Bussy for the defence of the colony.[5]

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[1] *Journal de Bussy*, pp. 49-52 (Views of Bussy and Souillac about postponing Bussy's departure for India).

Thus in spite of the arrival of Peinier's convoy, Bussy was compelled by the unfortunate turn of affairs to remain in virtual inactivity till the end of November, as it was obviously out of the question to lead an expedition to India with sick and dying troops. However, the four months from August to November were not totally wasted. There was much to be done to reorganise the commissariat, to settle the question of pay and clothings of the officers and men, to procure provisions, and to look to other matters connected with fitting out an expeditionary force. In spite of his ill-health Bussy showed uncommon activity in tackling these various problems, and the pages of his *Journal* offer the best testimony to the sympathetic care and meticulous attention he paid to the minutest details. What is frequently overlooked behind the glory or the tragedy of a military expedition is the importance of this silent and patient work of preparation, which in reality should redound to the credit of a commander to the same extent as a brilliant victory in the field. Thus, although it is out of place here to go into the details of the administrative decisions and measures taken by Bussy, nobody who wants to form a correct appreciation of the qualities of Bussy as a general can overlook the pages of his *Journal* dealing with the little known work of preparation between August and November.

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[1] *Journal de Bussy*, pp. 56-57. The second convoy under de Soulanges started from Brest in April but was intercepted by Barrington and forced back to port. No further attempt was made to send reinforcements to Bussy.

[2] *Ibid*, p. 59.

[3] P. A. ms. 390—Bussy to Conway, 25th September, 1782. A much higher number of the sick, 2,700, is given in the *Journal de Bussy* under date September 29 (p. 132).

[4] *Journal de Bussy*, p. 96.

[5] P. A. ms. 382—Bussy's letter to Castries, 9th July, 1782.

VII. *News from India.*

During these months of forced stay in the Isle of France Bussy was continuously receiving reports from India, from various sources, which caused him more and more anxiety, specially in view of his inability for the moment to do anything to improve the situation. About the middle of September he received letters from de Suffren, Duchemin and de Launay.[1] In his letter, dated Cuddalore 30th July, de Suffren, while expressing delight at Bussy's arrival in the Isle of France, showed great concern at the uncertainty of the arrival of Peinier's convoy, which necessarily imposed an unexpected delay in Bussy's coming to India. In the meantime the miltary situation in south India was rapidly deteriorating for the French, and by the time that Bussy might arrive, de Suffren feared that it might not be possible for them to carry on operations on the Coromandel Coast. He had with great difficulty persuaded Haidar Ali to remain on the Coromandel Coast so long only on the assurance of the speedy arrival of Bussy with his expeditionary force, but now that Bussy's coming was unavoidably postponed it would be difficult to prevent Haidar from leaving the Carnatic and moving off to the Malabar Coast. In the absence of Haidar it would be impossible for the French to maintain themselves on the Coromandel Coast, since the Carnatic had been so thoroughly devastated that they could not expect to procure any provisions and transport cattle. In that case Bussy would have to land either in the region to the north of Madras which had not suffered any devastation, or on the Malabar Coast, where Haidar's assistance would be available. De Suffren then gave an account of his interview with Haidar and expressed his intention of wintering his fleet at Achin, where he asked Bussy to join him.

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[1] *Journal de Bussy*, pp. 97-102.

Bussy naturally felt alarmed about the fate of the French expeditionary force in India, now reduced to 800 men only from the original number of nearly 3,000, if Haidar actually left the Carnatic. It was obvious that this small force with artillery, munitions and other stores would fall into the hands of the English, and it was an extremely difficult task to transport them safely to Ceylon, specially in view of the fact that the junction of Bikerton with Hughes would give the English a decided naval superiority. All that Bussy could do for the moment was to send three ships from Peinier's fleet (which had arrived on the 15th), the *Fendant*, the *Argonaute* and the *Naiade*, to reinforce de Suffren,[1] instructing him to allow a part of the French troops to accompany Haidar Ali if the latter decided to leave the Coromandel Coast, and the rest of the force with the heavy artillery, munitions etc. was to be transported to Ceylon. The Dutch island was then to serve as the base of operations for the French.[2]

On the 19th October Bussy received further letters from India. The letter from de Launay, dated Cuddalore 2nd August, contained a detailed account of his negotiations with Haidar.[3] The various reports he received convinced Bussy all the more of the urgent necessity of his arrival in India to avert a further deterioration of the situation. On the 25th October Bussy came to know from de Suffren's letter to Souillac of the capture of Trinkomali and the fourth combat with the English fleet on the 3rd September.[1] The capture of Trinkomali was no doubt extremely happy news, but de Suffren was in great need of further reinforcements, particularly in view of the imminence of Bikerton's junction with Hughes. On the 5th November there reached another letter from de Suffren to Souillac, informing him of his extremely critical position and of his imminent departure for Achin, where he expected to be joined by Bussy.[2] Early in December while Bussy was in the midst of preparations for departure from the Isle of France there arrived several letters from India, all written about the middle of October, from de Launay, Hoffelize, Mottais de Narbonne and a private Frenchman, describing the pitiable state of the French army at Cuddalore, without money, without provisions, and shabbily treated by Haidar Ali.[3]

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[1] *Journal de Bussy*, p. 105.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 106.

[3] *Ibid.* pp. 140-147 (the letter has been noticed already).

On the 7th November Bussy received a packet of letters from the Minister, Marquis de Castries, written between December 1781 and June 1782. One of these, dated 26th February, communicated to him the substance of a plan of operations in India proposed by Chevalier to the Minister. It was the old plan of Chevalier, namely an attack on Bengal by French forces from the south and by the Imperial army under Najaf Khan from the north. Bengal was the vital centre of English power and prosperity, and once Bengal had fallen, Madras and Bombay could not resist very long. So Chevalier suggested that Bussy should lead his expeditionary force straight to the mouth of the Ganges for an attack on Bengal. He took good care to make some provision for himself in the plan. In order to make a concerted attack on Bengal with the help of Najaf Khan, it was necessary to send a diplomatic agent to Delhi to conclude a treaty of alliance with the Emperor, and Chevalier considered himself as the most qualified person for such a mission in view of his title of Mughal nobility and his long experience in India. He was prepared to undertake the mission provided he was given a high official status to impress the Indian Princes. In sending the proposal of Chevalier to Bussy, the Minister explained that he did it only for the consideration of Bussy and that he had not the slightest intention to impose any particular plan of operations on him.

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[1] *Journal de Bussy,* pp. 178-187.

[2] *Ibid,* p. 225.

[3] *Ibid,* pp. 289-294.

About the plan of Chevalier, Bussy wrote in his *Journal* that from the time of his departure from France he had given serious consideration to it, but it appeared to him as extremely difficult of execution. On his arrival in the Isle of France, he had written to Montigny to negotiate with the Imperial Court and had also charged de Launay to write to Najaf Khan. But there were insurmountable difficulties in the way of the execution of the plan. It was impossible for the large ships of the French squadron to move up the Ganges, nor did the French have country boats to transport their artillery from the mouth of the river. Secondly, the plan required a decided naval superiority for the French and mastery of the Coast of Orissa for an easy transport of troops. Regarding the value of Chevalier's title of Mughal nobility, Bussy regarded it as entirely chimercial, and he was definitely of opinion that without an assistance of money and troops it was impossible to induce Najaf Khan to co-operate with the French.[1]

VIII. *Departure from the Isle of France.*

The epidemic of scurvy which had upset the plans of Bussy and had prolonged his stay in the Isle of France began to subside by the beginning of November, and from the middle of the month Bussy started making preparations for his departure. The disease had taken a heavy toll, and Bussy had at his disposal only 2,275 troops, including those who were still lying in hospital and not likely to be released for some time. In order to make up this deficiency he decided to take some men from the regiment of the Isle of France, whose place would be taken by the troops to be left behind in hospital. Thus the total number that Bussy could take with him remained 2,275.[2] About a month was taken up by necessary preparations, and on the 11th December Bussy gave his final instructions to Peinier for departure on the 18th. The destination laid down was Achin where de Suffren was expected to be wintering his ships, but in case Peinier did not find de Suffren's squadron there he was to proceed to Trinkomali.[1] Before finally embarking on the *Fendant* on the 18th, Bussy left detailed instructions for Souillac about sending the later convoys of troops that might arrive in the Isle of France.[2] Although short of troops himself, Bussy did not like to withdraw the regiment of Pondicherry from the Cape of Good Hope, where it was needed not so much for the defence of the colony as for maintaining French influence at that strategic point, the Dutch authorities being rather lukewarm in their co-operation with the French.

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[1] *Journal de Bussy*, pp. 228-231.

[2] *Ibid*, pp. 237-238.

Bussy left the Isle of France without much hope or confidence. He appeared quite diffident about the future and wrote in his *Journal:* "At last I am embarking today at five in the afternoon, a convalescent, and yet much weak, from a cruel illness lasting for more than five months, which on several occasions appeared to carry me to the grave. It is certain that placed in my situation most other persons would not have proceeded further. But the confidence with which the King has honoured me, the favours which His Majesty has granted me, the noble dealings of the Ministers, and finally the importance which has been attached to the expedition entrusted to me have determined me to sacrifice the little health that I still retain and to start for India in spite of the paucity of my present resources . . . . . In fact nearly all the two thousand and two hundred men I am taking with me have suffered from a pestilential malady which has completely wasted their vitality. Most of them are still convalescents; the voyage that I have to make is long . . . . .; the malady may develop again . . . . .; and when I shall arrive at my destination I shall find there a thousand men at the most, because in forming a guess from the various reports received . . . . . the troops under the command of d'Hoffelize, without including those distributed among the ships of the squadron, may at best come up to this number. It should be noticed that these forces are far below the number stipulated in my instructions, which fixed the number of troops that I was to have at 10,500 ; this being reduced by shipwrecks and by the necessity of garrisoning the Cape would have remained at 8,000 to 9,000. . . . My situation presents a prospect sufficient to discourage all others except me, but my zeal has not been destroyed by the major obstacles I had to surmount since the moment of my departure from France, and I can see quite clearly, without being frightened, all the other obstacles which remain for me to face . . . . .; the principal one is to re-establish discipline among the troops, who are in India, on my arrival there and to bring them out of the shameful langour in which Messieurs Duchemin and d'Hoffelize have allowed them to remain . . . . . ."[1] Bussy also expressed his opinion about the inhabitants of the Isle of France and their "spirit of cupidity and rapine" and laid down certain broad principles about re-organising the administrative structure there.

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[1] *Journal de Bussy,* pp. 295-296.

[2] *Ibid,* pp. 297-299.

On the same day (18th December) Bussy also wrote two letters to Marquis de Castries, sending him an extract from his *Journal* and giving him a detailed account of the course of events during his stay in the Isle of France, the news he had received from India and the prospect facing him there with 3,000 troops in all and inadequate financial resources.[2]

Bussy finally left the Isle of France on the 18th, and after a week's stay at the Isle of Bourbon, from the 19th to the 26th,[3] started for Achin, the *rendez-vous* fixed for joining de Suffren's squadron. The destination was reached about the end of February 1783, but Bussy was surprised at not finding de Suffren's squadron there, nor could he get any information about where it had gone to. On the 2nd March he called for the opinion of the naval officers, and all of them advised him to proceed immediately to Trinkomali.[4] Bussy accepted the advice and on the 10th March the French ships reached Trinkomali, where they made the happy discovery of de Suffren's squadron. Bussy was given an enthusiastic reception by de Suffren, who came to meet him on board his ship, the *Fendant*. De Launay also, who had come to Trinkomali some time earlier in expectation of his arrival, met him and gave him a detailed account of the military situation on the Coromandel Coast.

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[1] *Journal de Bussy*, pp. 299-303.

[2] P. A. mss. 397-398.

[3] *Journal de Bussy*, pp. 303-306.

[4] *Ibid*, pp. 310-314.

IX. *Arrival in India.*

In view of the urgency of the situation in India Bussy thought it necessary to hurry the preparation for his departure and to proceed at once to the Coromandel Coast. It was not an easy affair because of the deplorable state of de Suffren's squadron. Many of the ships required thorough repairs, and the deficiency in the crew personnel amounted to 1,800 men. De Suffren himself declared that it was impossible to take out his fleet before October. But the situation brooked no delay, and it was decided to convoy Bussy's expeditionary force by five ships of the line, which necessitated taking out all the men from the other seven ships.[1] Bussy's original plan, before his arrival at Trinkomali, was to land his troops between Karikal and Negapatam and to lay siege to the latter place. Negapatam would serve as a more secure base than Cuddalore, and its possession would give the French communication with Tanjore and Madura from where provisions could be procured. But Bussy had to change the plan when he learnt that the English, perhaps apprehensive of his imminent arrival on the Coromandel Coast, had destroyed the fortifications of that place as well as those of Wandiwash, Caranjoli and Vellore.[2] He was thus compelled to lead his expeditionary force to the only base which the French possessed in India, namely Cuddalore.

Immediately after his arrival at Trinkomali Bussy received the proposal of the Maratha Government for a treaty of alliance, sent by Montigny through Warnet and Chauvigny.[3] Although he did not fully approve of the terms proposed, he appreciated the diplomatic work done by Montigny to keep the Marathas and Nizam Ali friendly towards the French. In view of the alarming report brought by de Launay that Tipu, tired of waiting for Bussy, was about to start for the Malabar Coast, de Suffren sent de Moissac immediately on Bussy's arrival at Trinkomali to announce the news to the Mysore ruler. Bussy also sent two senior officers for the same purpose, Comte de la Marck and Marquis de la Rochethulon, with letters assuring Tipu of the same support from France as had been given to his father.[1] The two missions were, however, entirely fruitless, as Tipu had left the Coromandel Coast even before the arrival of de Moissac.[2] De la Marck and de la Rochethulon sent their letters to Tipu by messengers and waited at Cuddalore for Bussy.

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[1] *Journal de Bussy,* pp. 322-323.

[2] *Ibid,* pp. 319-320.

[3] It will be remembered that the boat by which they were travelling, the *Lézard,* was captured by the English at Tranquebar in violation of Danish neutrality. Chauvigny was taken prisoner, but Warnet could luckily escape with all the important papers.

Bussy finally left Trinkomali on the 13th March with seven ships of the line and nine fast transport vessels.[3] As he started on the last lap of his journey to India, the prospect lying before him appeared absolutely bleak, and he wrote in his *Journal*: "As regards our present situation on the Coromandel Coast, it is such that I would not have undertaken the task of the re-establishment of our nation after peace with such a small number of troops as had been given to me for waging war."[4] The French had no ally to count upon. Tipu Sultan was extremely lukewarm and undependable, and another potential ally, Basalat Jang, was dead, rumoured to have been poisoned by his brother, Nizam Ali. The Dutch were unfriendly, and in spite of the best efforts of de Launay the Dutch authorities at Batavia and in Ceylon refused to pay the five million livres stipulated in Paris, on the ground that they did not have any money and, secondly, that they had already furnished immense supplies to de Suffren's squadron. The Dutch refusal to pay money was a great blow to Bussy, who was left with only five million livres, not expected to carry him through for more than four or five months. Apart from the normal expenses of the army after his arrival in India, he had to meet heavy arrears of pay due to the troops under Hoffelize. Bussy had thus very good reason to regret bitterly that the Minister had not accepted his advice to provide him with ten million livres in cash, as he had proposed in his *mémoire.*[1]

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[1] *Journal de Bussy*, p. 321.

[2] *Ibid*, pp. 325-326 (letter of Hoffelize to de Suffren, 8th March 1783).

[3] *Ibid*, p. 319.

[4] *Ibid*, p. 323.

On the 16th the French ships reached Porto Novo, which was selected as a more convenient place for landing troops than Cuddalore. The smaller vessels, however, carrying provisions and munitions were sent to the latter place.[2] It was at Porto Novo that Bussy learnt, from a letter of Hoffelize, that Tipu had already left for the Malabar Coast. He also learnt that Hughes was to start from Bombay with fifteen ships about the middle of February. It was thus necessary for the French to complete their landing of troops, munitions and provisions as quickly as possible, and allow de Suffren to return at once with his ships to Trinkomali which lay exposed to an English attack.[3] So the disembarkation of troops went on all through the night of the 16th, and on the next day they marched to their camp at Manjakuppam near Cuddalore.[4] By the 22nd the landing of munitions and provisions at Cuddalore had also been completed, and immediately after de Suffren returned with his ships to Trinkomali. He, however, assured Bussy that he would come out with his squadron to meet the English fleet if the latter attempted an attack on Cuddalore, which was a rather insecure military base.[5]

About his feelings on arrival in India, Bussy wrote in his *Journal,* "I am without allies, without provisions, without means of transport, and in a country devastated beyond imagination. I have only five millions to procure all these things as also to meet the other expenses necessary for an army; only the pay of the troops, apart from other normal expenses, will amount to nearly a million a month in spite of the reforms that I want to carry out."[6] The letter of Falk, the Dutch Governor of Ceylon, showed clearly that no help was to be expected from that quarter.[7] The Danes of Tranquebar appeared definitely more favourable to the English, and they often violated the

[1] *Journal de Bussy,* pp. 324-325.

[2] *Ibid,* p. 325.

[3] *Ibid,* p. 327.

[4] *Ibid,* pp. 329-330.

[5] *Ibid,* pp. 341-342.

[6] *Ibid,* p. 329.

[7] *Ibid,* p. 328.

code of conduct laid down for neutrals;[1] while the letters of Hoffelize convinced Bussy of the bad faith of Tipu and of the general he had left behind to assist the French, Sayyid Sahib, who refused to do anything to facilitate the landing of French troops and munitions.[2]

Bussy had at last arrived in India with his long-advertised expeditionary force, but what a bleak prospect was it that faced him,—with inadequate troops and money, without any allies, without provisions and without even a secure base of operations!

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[1] *Journal de Bussy*, p. 337.

[2] *Ibid*, pp. 334-335 (letter dated 18th March 1783).

CHAPTER XII

BUSSY'S RELATIONS WITH INDIAN POWERS

I. *Bussy's views on alliance with some of the Indian Powers.*

The first task of Bussy on arrival in India was to get into contact with the country Powers whose alliance was necessary for the success of the military operations against the English. It was all the more necessary, since Bussy had at his disposal wholly inadequate resources, only 3,000 European troops and five million livres which could carry him through for four or five months at the most. He found himself without any provisions, without any means of transport, and without any secure base even, Cuddalore being a fully exposed place hardly suitable for defence. It was obviously impossible for the French to launch any large-scale, independent operations against the English possessions, unless the energies of the English were diverted by simultaneous attacks from other quarters. From the outset, therefore, they were dependent on the support and co-operation of some of the Indian Powers. It was a strange irony that Bussy should have arrived in India in such a state as to compel him to solicit the help of the country Powers, when he had stressed so strongly in his *mémoires* of 1777 and 1781 the need of being independent of such assistance, at least during the early stage of the operations. As he argued then, a few initial successes won by the French with their own efforts would induce the country Powers to seek their alliance, instead of the French having to beg for their support.

The four principal Powers whose co-operation formed the basis of all the numerous projects submitted to the French Government since 1763, with varying emphasis on one or other, were the Mughal Emperor, the Marathas, Nizam Ali and Haidar Ali. But, as we have seen already, in spite of all the intrigues and reports of the French agents at the various *Darbars* for more than a decade, no definite treaty of alliance had been concluded with any one of these Powers by the time the French Government despatched an expeditionary force under Bussy at the end of 1781. The result was that when Bussy actually arrived in India in March 1783 to execute the ambitious project of overthrowing English domination, there was not a single country Power on whose co-operation he could count. Bussy had to start practically from the beginning official negotiations with the country Powers, and a shrewd person like him must have realised that it was poor diplomacy to make overtures for an alliance and military co-operation after hostilities had already started. He could not indeed have expected much out of these negotiations, and in fact the letters which he wrote to the Indian Princes did not show any keenness of desire on his part to hasten negotiations for an alliance with any of them. His whole policy, as revealed by his letters and secret instructions to French agents at the different courts, was merely to bide time.

One great source of embarrassment for Bussy in dealing with the Indian Princes was the adverse reaction created in the minds of most of them by the French having already committed themselves in support of Haidar and his son Tipu, who were hated by every other Power as usurpers, ambitious to expand their dominions at the expense of their neighbours. As Bussy wrote in his *Journal*, "What will Nizam Ali, the son of Basalat Jang and the other Princes whom I am seeking to win over and who are all interested in the destruction of this Nawab (Tipu), think of the French detachment being associated with his army? Will it not confirm their impression, as it must, that our intention is always to support the son of Haidar Ali Khan and that consequently they can put but little reliance on what I am telling them in my negotiations?"[1] It is quite true that French military support to Tipu proved highly embarrassing to Bussy in his dealings with the other Powers, but it deserves to be noted that during his stay in the Isle of France he had authorised the support of a French detachment to Haidar if the latter left for the Malabar Coast. The thing was that however much it might alienate the other Powers, the necessity of the military situation compelled the French to seek the help of the Nawab of Mysore and to give him support in return. Their only base in India, Cuddalore, lay within his jurisdiction and they were absolutely dependent on him for the supply of provisions and means of transport. That was why, of all the Indian Princes it was to Haidar that Bussy thought it necessary to announce first his arrival in the Isle of France, and it was to him that he sent a personal envoy, de Launay. It was to Tipu first that he announced his arrival at Trinkomali and sent two senior officers to convey his message. Even when he learnt that Tipu had suddenly left for the Malabar Coast, virtually abandoning the French to shift for themselves, it was to him first that he announced his arrival in India.

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[1] *Journal de Bussy*, p. 336.

Referring to relations with Tipu, Bussy wrote in his *Journal* under date 21st March: "It (his letter to Tipu of the same date) shows how much I am still anxious to manage the Nawab although his departure from the coast has the appearance of desertion, judging from the little consideration he paid to the storage of provisions for us and to the supply of means of landing and other necessaries required by an army on march . . . . . I have begun the task of opening negotiations with the Marathas, the Subadar of the Deccan and other Princes, but always keeping Tipu in good humour, because it is important under the circumstances." Bussy, however, was strongly opposed to any alliance with Haidar Ali or Tipu Sultan. "These two brigands or tyrants did never deserve, either by birth or by their conduct, the slightest consideration from His Majesty. Both of them are looked upon and treated by everybody in India as belonging to these two categories only. All the Princes of Asia and even the lowest of the outcastes view them with horror. In fact, it was only by monstrous extortions that the father could achieve power, and it is by continuing the same methods that he and his son could maintain themselves in power till the present. This alliance (French connection with Haidar and Tipu) is one of the principal causes which have kept all the Princes of Asia at a distance from the French nation, reducing us for the moment to a dependence on those resources alone which Tipu Sultan would like to supply us. Since my arrival here I have come to realise more and more the little hope that may be entertained about this precarious Power, and everything confirms me that the only alliance which was suitable alike to the dignity of the King as to the interests of the nation was that with Nizam Ali, Subadar of the Deccan.

That Prince desired nothing better than an alliance with us, but he complained that France had neglected him too much. I am trying to win him over again, without being able to say yet what will be the result of my negotiations ......"[1]

II. *Correspondence between Bussy and Tipu.*

Let us now notice the correspondence that passed between Bussy and Tipu till the news of the conclusion of peace. Bussy's first letter to Tipu was from Trinkomali, dated 11th March. Tipu was still believed to be in the Carnatic. Bussy informed him of his arrival in Ceylon and wrote that he was sending two high-ranking officers, de la Marck and de la Rochethulon, to convey to him his compliments and to concert joint measures against the English.[2] We have seen already how the two envoys were disappointed on their arrival at Cuddalore. Tipu had already left for the Malabar Coast, and Bussy's letter was sent to him by messenger. Bussy sent a second letter to Tipu on the 21st, from Cuddalore.[3] He wrote that on his arrival at Trinkomali he had sent two principal officers of his army to convey to Tipu his condolence on the death of his father and to "renew to him all the assurances that de Launay had been charged to give to the late Nawab." He expressed deep regret at Tipu's absence from the Coromandel Coast "at a time when it was most necessary for us to combine", and he implored Tipu to return to the Carnatic at the earliest possible moment. Bussy informed Tipu that he had arrived at Cuddalore with 4,000 troops and that he was shortly expecting a reinforcement of the same number. A Danish ship, lately arrived at Tranquebar, reported having seen this convoy at the Cape of Good Hope. Perhaps as a reminder of Tipu's obligation to the French at the time of his succession, Bussy expressed satisfaction at the services rendered by Hoffelize in maintaining order in the Mysore army after the death of Haidar. Finally, Bussy requested that pending his return to the Carnatic, Tipu should give strict orders to his officers to supply provisions and means of transport to the French.

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[1] *Journal de Bussy*, pp. 339-340.
[2] P. A. ms. 487.
[3] *Ibid*, ms. 494; also *Journal de Bussy*, pp. 338-339.

In a letter bearing the same date (March 21) and presumably a reply to the earlier letter from Bussy, Tipu expressed satisfaction at the arrival of Bussy with his expeditionary force, but stated that if he had arrived earlier their combined forces could have defeated the English and captured Madras. He then explained how the invasion of his territory by the English and their capture of Bednore and Mangalore had compelled him to leave the Coromandel Coast, but he had taken care to leave 35,000 troops under the command of his brother Mir Moidin Ali Khan for the assistance of the French. He informed Bussy that in ten or twelve days' time he would move against Bednore which he expected to capture, and that he hoped to go to the Coromandel Coast within a month and a half and unite with the French expeditionary force. They would then be able to undertake concerted operations against the English. In the meantime he asked Bussy to send de Suffren's squadron to his assistance at Mangalore. On the margin of this letter Bussy wrote the following comment, "these thirty-five thousand men are really twelve or fourteen thousand bad cavalry and bad infantry, and even of these twelve or fourteen thousand men, three thousand left for Tanjore about seven or eight days back."[1] Evidently, Bussy could not rely on the good faith of his supposed ally.

On the 26th Bussy replied to Tipu's letter, explaining the reasons which had delayed his arrival in India. He had come with 4,000 troops, 5 ships of the line and 36 transport vessels, and in two months' time he expected a further reinforcement of 4,000 troops. Bussy wrote that from Tipu's letter he quite appreciated the compelling necessity which had made him leave for the Malabar Coast, and that he had communicated Tipu's desire to de Suffren to go to Mangalore with his squadron. But he feared that the season was far too advanced to allow de Suffren to undertake a voyage to the Malabar Coast. He, however, assured Tipu that it was the intention of the King of France to give him all possible military assistance, without any thought of keeping to himself any of the conquests to be made in India. If Bussy "had found on arrival means of transport for my artillery, I would have at once marched against the English and laid siege to Trichinopoly, which I would have handed over to Mir Moidin Ali Khan, as being subject to the province of the Carnatic and consequently to him, the Nawab, whom I recognise in advance as the lord of the Carnatic." Bussy continued that "in order to execute this project favourable to his (Tipu's) interests it is necessary that he on his side should send me a large number of transport cattle and about 100 camels, on cash payment if necessary, to drag my artillery and mortars and to carry bombs, bullets and other munitions, and that he should also give orders to Mir Moidin Ali Khan to furnish me with all supplies of this kind that he may be able to procure." While asking him to return to the Coromandel Coast at the earliest possible moment, Bussy urged that pending his return he should send him at once all the supplies he needed, since any delay would be detrimental to their joint interests. He reminded Tipu that he had landed at Cuddalore, and not at some point to the north of Madras, only to be able to give him military assistance, and he referred once again to the support of a French contingent having been given to him by Hoffelize.[1]

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[1] P. A. ms. 495.

Bussy also wrote to Piveron de Morlat, who was entrusted with handing over the letter to Tipu referred to above. He gave Piveron de Morlat a frank account of the condition of the expeditionary force, and stated that it would become positively hopeless if Piveron failed to persuade Tipu to send the supplies needed so badly.[2] In his *Journal* under date 26th March Bussy commented on the faithlessness of Tipu and of his agent, Mir Moidin Ali Khan. Tipu had informed him of having left thirty-five thousand troops for the assistance of the French, but in fact they numbered only twelve to fourteen thousand, and of the worst sort. Tipu had also written to him to ask Moidin Ali Khan for all the supplies he needed, but the latter had neither the means nor the will to procure them. "Look at these Asiatics! If they are to be believed, they have given the most positive orders and they have provided everything in abundance, but the object of all these emphatic and fine promises is only to deceive those who are simple-minded enough to believe in them."[1]

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[1] P. A. ms. 496; also *Journal de Bussy*, pp. 349-350.
[2] *Journal de Bussy*, p. 350.

Bussy became even more convinced of the duplicity of Tipu and of the officer he had left behind to assist the French, Moidin Ali Khan, commonly known as Sayyid Sahib, when four days later he received the news that the latter had suddenly decided, on a rather flimsy pretext, to separate himself from the French army under Hoffelize and to march off south with the entire body of Mysore troops. The news was communicated in a letter from Krishna Rao, Tipu's agent at the French camp, to Rajappa Ayyar, the interpreter of Hoffelize.[2] The letter stated that Sayyid Sahib had asked Hoffelize to send a high-ranking officer to his camp to receive an important communication. De Villeneuve, commanding the regiment of Austrasie, was sent accordingly. Sayyid Sahib told him that an English detachment under Colonel Lang had started from Trichinopoly with 12 battalions of sepoys, 1,000 European troops, and some forces supplied by the Poligars with a view to attack the fort of Karoor. The commander of the fort had asked for immediate relief, which had decided Sayyid Sahib to march off at once with the entire army of the Nawab under his command. Sayyid Sahib also proposed that Hoffelize should accompany him with the French contingent. Bussy commented on the margin of the letter, "This news is the consequence of the secret instructions which Tipu has given to Sayyid Sahib to remain with him (Hoffelize) only for a short while and then under some plausible pretext to cross the Ghats himself as well, because it is certain that Colonel Lang does not have more than 500 men under him, including three and a half quarters of the garrisons of Tanjore and Trichinopoly, and that he has taken with him only 4 battalions of bad sepoys and a few thousand Poligar troops. The whole thing shows the bad faith of Tipu as also of the chiefs whom he has left with M. d'Hoffelize." The letter of Krishna Rao continued that de Villeneuve replied that he could not march south with

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[1] *Journal de Bussy*, pp. 350-351.

[2] P. A. ms. 497 (letter dated 28th March). Bussy received the news on the 30th (*Journal de Bussy*, pp. 358-361).

Sayyid Sahib without Bussy's order, and that if the Mysore contingent suddenly departed, it would leave the door open to the English to advance against Cuddalore. De Villeneuve asked Sayyid Sahib to write to Bussy for instructions, but although Bussy was only 12 leagues away and a reply could have been received in a few hours, Sayyid Sahib replied that he had no time to lose and must start at once to save his master's territory.

Tipu, as we have seen, was most anxious to get the assistance of the French naval squadron in his operations against the English on the Malabar Coast. On the 30th March he wrote to de Suffren, recalling to him the assurance he had given to go to Mangalore with his squadron and asking him to come quickly, so that after the destruction of the English power on the Malabar Coast he could pass on to the Coromandel Coast and join with Bussy.[1] To Bussy's letter of the 26th March Tipu replied on the 2nd April, assuring him that he had given positive orders to his officers to supply everything needed by the French and asking him again to send de Suffren's squadron to the Malabar Coast to assist him in operations against the English.[2] On the 30th April Bussy wrote to Tipu, confirming the conversation he had with Muhammad Usman, who had been sent to him by Tipu, and announcing the return of Piveron de Morlat to Tipu's camp. Bussy added that if Tipu could not come to the Coromandel Coast, he should send eight to ten thousand cavalry and a large number of transport cattle. He regretted that it was only the lack of means of transport for his artillery which had prevented him from forestalling the English, who were advancing towards Cuddalore with land and naval forces.[3] This letter was sent through Piveron de Morlat, and a second letter in identical terms was sent through de Lallée who was also returning to Tipu's camp.[4]

Tipu replied to Bussy on the 31st May, assuring him that he had sent orders to his officers to supply transport cattle, horses, and camels to the French.[5] Bussy wrote to Tipu again on the 18th June, urging him to come to the Coromandel Coast without delay and to send in advance a large body of cavalry. He also informed Tipu that he had received through Muhammad Usman a letter in Marathi which Tipu had desired him to address to the Poona *Darbar* and that he had done so without making any changes in it.[1] In the next letter, dated 2nd July, Bussy informed Tipu that he had received news of the conclusion of peace between France and England and that he was sending an agent to give him all the details that ought to be communicated to an ally. Bussy advised Tipu to make peace with the English likewise, and offered his good offices for that purpose.[2]

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[1] P. A. ms. 503.
[2] *Ibid*, ms. 510.
[3] *Ibid*, ms. 517.
[4] *Ibid*, ms. 518.
[5] *Ibid*, ms. 527.

III. *Examination of French Relations with Tipu.*

From this review of correspondence between Bussy and Tipu and from the observations made by Bussy in his *Journal,* one thing becomes clear,—that there was little spirit of friendliness and co-operation on either side, a factor that was to a large extent responsible for the barren result of the French military operations. The thing was that, on his side Bussy never liked the idea of a close alliance with Haidar and Tipu. In his *mémoires* of 1777 and 1781 as also in his *Journal* he used very strong language against them, calling them usurpers, brigands and tyrants, hated by all the Powers of India. The reports which he received from de Launay about Haidar's treatment to the French army under Duchemin (and later under Hoffelize) and the sudden departure of Tipu from the Coromandel Coast, leaving the French absolutely unprovided, only confirmed the views he had held previously that little reliance could be placed on the co-operation of the Nawab of Mysore. In spite of all that, he had to placate Tipu out of necessity for the supply of provisions and means of transport, which Tipu alone could provide and without which the position of the French army would be desperate.

On their side, both Haidar and Tipu had strong distrust of the French. It had its origin from the cowardly desertion of d'Orves in 1781, at a moment when the co-operation of the French would have placed the English power in south India completely at the mercy of Haidar. Haidar could never forget that incident, which coloured all his later relations with the French. For more than a year after that he was left entirely to his own resources without any help from the French, and when finally a small French contingent was landed at Cuddalore under Duchemin, he naturally expressed unwillingness to furnish all the money and provisions required by it before it had given proof of its ability and enterprise in the field. It was quite legitimate for him to expect that since the French had come to fight a common enemy, as much for their as for his advantage, they must bear a part of the expenses of the operations without trying to shift the entire burden on their ally. Then again, Haidar waited for a long time for the much advertised coming of Bussy with a formidable expeditionary force, and the frustration of his hope naturally soured his relations with the French. After Haidar's death, Tipu also waited for some time for the arrival of Bussy and did not ultimately leave the Coromandel Coast till he had received alarming reports of sweeping English successes in his territories on the Malabar Coast. The defence of his own possessions was more important to him than conquests in the Carnatic, and therefore his departure for the Malabar Coast was quite justifiable, nay imperative, in his own interest, however much the French might regard it as a base desertion unworthy of an ally.

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[1] P. A. mss. 530-531.

[2] *Ibid,* ms. 532.

Thus it appears that down to Tipu's departure from the Coromandel Coast, both sides had reasonable defence for their conduct. After the separation of the Mysore and French forces, the interests of the two parties became entirely different. For the time being Tipu had no concern with what happened in the Carnatic. Engaged in the west against the invaders of his territory, his supreme need was the assistance of the French fleet on the Malabar Coast, for which he solicited both Bussy and de Suffren. On the other hand, the French had little immediate concern with what happened on the Malabar Coast. It was impossible for them to send their fleet there, leaving Trinkomali and Cuddalore completely exposed to an attack by the combined fleets of Hughes and Bikerton, which had been reported to have started from Bombay in February and were expected on the eastern coast any moment. The French regarded the Coromandel Coast as the principal theatre of operations, and their supreme needs were,—a body of cavalry, provisions and transport for their artillery, for which Bussy wrote repeatedly to Tipu, without success. On this point it seems, after examining both sides of the picture, that Tipu would have acted more wisely and his interests would have been served better if he had offered some co-operation to the French, as he could have done without detriment to his operations in the west. Large-scale operations by the French on the Coromandel Coast would have diverted the attention of the English to some extent and would have, perhaps, partly relieved the pressure in the west. As it was, the French army remained completely immobilised and could do nothing to relieve the pressure on Tipu.

IV. *Relations with the Marathas.*

Next let us notice Bussy's relations with the Marathas. In his two previous *mémoires*, discussed already, Bussy had laid emphasis on an alliance with the Marathas, who constituted the only Power capable of giving effective help to the French in their operations against the English. It may be recalled that a Franco-Maratha alliance was a pet project of all the persons who submitted schemes to the French Government, and in fact the Maratha Confederacy occupied such a dominating central position in India that without its active co-operation it was impossible for the French to expect success in any part of the country,—in Sind or in Bengal, in the north or in the south. On their side, the Marathas, since the outbreak of hostilities with the English, had also evinced an interest in forming an alliance with France, the most ardent advocate of that policy in the Poona Government being Nana Phadnavis. It is difficult to ascertain which side took the initiative in opening negotiations. We know that the first time such negotiations were started was during the visit of Saint-Lubin in 1777-78, but if the evidence of one of the associates of Saint-Lubin is to be believed, it appears that Saint-Lubin had been sent from France in response to an overture from Poona. But then we do not know whether the Poona Government took the move entirely on its own, or on the basis of some earlier overtures made by Chevalier from Chandernagore.

After Saint-Lubin the contact between the French and the Marathas was renewed by Montigny in 1779 during his short visit to Poona on his way back to France from Delhi. The next step taken was in 1781, when the Poona Government decided to send an agent named Zainul Abedin Khan to Souillac, Governor of the Isle of France, with some definite terms of alliance. The terms, not much different from those proposed through Montigny in 1782, required the French to land two thousand troops at Chaul, to capture Bombay and to co-operate with the Marathas in their operations against the English, in exchange for which they would get Bombay in full sovereignty and trading rights in the Maratha territories, besides all the expenses of the military expedition.[1] Zainul Abedin Khan however proceeded only up to Goa, where in October he met Montigny, just arrived from France on his way to Poona, having been sent by the French Government to negotiate a treaty of alliance with the Marathas.

At Poona Montigny carried on prolonged talks, which resulted in the drawing up of articles for a treaty of alliance.[2] The terms were similar to those proposed in 1781, except that the French were to land a force of 10,000 troops and were to get Surat in addition to Bombay. But they were to pay their own expenses, and neither party was to conclude peace without previous consultation with the other. This draft treaty was to have been submitted to Duchemin, the commander of the first French expeditionary force landed at Cuddalore in March 1782, but by the time it was completed news reached Montigny about the arrival of Bussy in the Isle of France. The Maratha proposals were therefore sent to Bussy through Warnet and Chauvigny, but the boat by which they were travelling, the *Lézard*, was captured by the English at Tranquebar. Chauvigny was taken prisoner, but Warnet could escape with all the papers, which were later sent to Trinkomali, where Bussy received them on his arrival in March 1783.

Bussy also received at the same time a pressing letter from

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[1] Martineau—*Bussy et l'Inde Française,* pp. 349-351.

[2] For details see chapter VII, the section on Montigny.

Montigny, urging him to accept the terms of the Marathas at once to prevent their concluding peace with the English. But while appreciating the zeal and sincerity of the French agent at Poona, Bussy could not persuade himself to accept the draft treaty without modifications to several of its articles, particularly to that one which required the French to continue the war in India even after the conclusion of peace in Europe. What made him even less inclined to accept the treaty at once was the strange policy of the Poona Government. As Bussy came to know, the Marathas were carrying on negotiations for peace with the English at the same time that the proposals for an alliance with France were being drawn up. Bussy, however, did not like to reject the terms altogether, but preferred to play for time. From Trinkomali he sent the proposals to Paris for the consideration of the Minister.[1] Reaching Cuddalore, he got fuller reports from Warnet about the state of affairs at the Poona Court, and in order to gain time he at once wrote to Nana Phadnavis and Hari Pant Phadke, informing them of his arrival in India with the first batch of the expeditionary force, the second batch being expected shortly, and assuring them that he would proceed to the Malabar Coast to co-operate with the Maratha forces against the English as soon as he had brought the operations on the Coromandel Coast, already started, to a successful conclusion. At the same time he sent detailed instructions to Montigny about the conduct he was to follow at Poona, the main point being to play for time to prevent the conclusion of a definitive treaty of peace between the Marathas and the English. He also gave Montigny a frank picture of the state of his army and of the reasons which prevented him from going to the Malabar Coast. He, however, expressed a definite hope of being able to go there after the arrival of reinforcements which he was expecting shortly.

It was quite easy for Bussy to lay down a line of conduct for Montigny, but for the latter to follow it was an impossible task. As Montigny complained, how could he keep the Marathas friendly towards the French and how could he prevent their concluding peace with the English, when they saw the French little inclined to accept their proposal of alliance, and far from co-operating with them on the Malabar Coast giving full military support to their mortal enemy, Tipu Sultan? The frantic letters of Montigny from Poona bring out clearly the embarrassing situation in which he was placed. One conclusion is inescapable about Bussy's diplomacy in relation to the Marathas. However much he might have stressed the importance of a Maratha alliance in the past, on his arrival in India he showed little anxiety to draw the Marathas closer to the French. It is true that his hands were somewhat tied by the fact that the first French expeditionary force had been landed on the Coromandel Coast to co-operate with Haidar, which compelled him to select that region as his theatre of operations in India, but even then he could have done a little more to conciliate the Marathas than merely writing two letters and holding out vague promises to be redeemed at some distant and uncertain date.

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[1] *Journal de Bussy*, p. 321.

V. *Bussy's Correspondence with the Maratha Darbar.*

Let us next notice Bussy's letters to Nana Phadnavis and Hari Pant Phadke as well as his instructions to Montigny. In his letter dated March 28, 1783, Bussy informed Nana that he had received Nana's reply to the letter he had sent in August 1782 through de Launay, in which Bussy had stated that the policy of the King of France in sending an expeditionary force to India was to drive the English out of the country and to restore all conquests to their original owners. Bussy then continued that he was extremely happy at the friendly disposition of the Court of Poona and that he soon hoped to renew his "old connection with the family of Baji Rao." Referring to the terms of alliance proposed through Montigny, Bussy wrote that he had duly received them from Warnet and that he was only waiting for the arrival of further reinforcements of men and munitions before finalising "the arrangements which are to cement a durable and indissoluble treaty of friendship between the French and the Marathas, which will be sent to him immediately through M. de Montigny", in whom Nana should place the fullest confidence. He then expressed regret at not having been able to land on the Malabar Coast to begin his operations there and at being obliged to wait till the next favourable season before proceeding there. In the meantime he urged Nana to complete his military preparations and to keep the enemy engaged wherever he could.[1] In the letter to Hari Pant Phadke, written on the same date, Bussy thanked him for his friendly sentiments for the French and wrote that he was giving serious consideration to the terms of alliance proposed by the Peshwa. He urged Phadke to use all his influence with the Peshwa to induce him to continue hostile operations against the English. He assured Phadke that he would proceed to the Malabar Coast in the next favourable season and asked him to have full confidence in Montigny.[2]

To Montigny Bussy sent certain instructions for his guidance, recommending a continuation of the old line of conduct, to keep the Poona Government friendly till it was possible for Bussy to give his final decision with regard to the terms of alliance. Montigny was to emphasise the value to the Marathas of an alliance with France, and to stress the contrast between the aggressive actions of the English and the moderate and friendly policy of the French, backed by a superiority in naval and military strength. He was to keep a strict watch on everything that happened at the Poona *Darbar*, particularly in relation to the English and Tipu. He was also to do everything that "prudence and diplomacy allow under such circumstances" to keep the Poona Government in the constant hope of receiving military help from the French in the next season. He was to speak highly of the strength of the expeditionary force already landed and of that expected shortly, and to declare the firm determination of Bussy to go to the Malabar Coast unless prevented by physical incapacity. The whole object was "in one word *to gain time,* which is the essential point, and to utilise it for .... facilitating the modifications that I cannot dispense with to the articles of the treaty proposed by the Regency, of which some are absolutely inadmissible." Finally, Montigny was to remove, by offering suitable excuses, the misgivings caused to the Marathas by the landing of the

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[1] P. A. ms. 498; also *Journal de Bussy,* pp. 353-354.

[2] P. A. ms. 500; also *Journal de Bussy,* p. 354.

French on the Coromandel Coast and their co-operation with Tipu.[1]

While giving these detailed instructions to Montigny, Bussy also sent him in secret code a picture of the real state of his expeditionary force and the reasons which prevented him from accepting the Maratha terms at once and going to the Malabar Coast. Bussy wrote that the army consisted of 3,500 Europeans, 3,000 to 4,000 Africans and 4,000 sepoys, not yet trained and disciplined, to which could be added 8,000 to 10,000 men including cavalry and infantry left by Tipu; and on the sea the French had a squadron of 14 ships of the line fit for service. He was expecting in April or May the arrival of de Soulanges with 4 ships of the line and 4,000 troops. As against this strength, the English were reported to have not more than 3,000 European troops and 20,000 sepoys in the north, the same number of men in the south and 15 ships of the line in good condition. It was likely that they would receive further reinforcements soon. Bussy stated that it was no longer the question as to what he should have done, i.e., whether he should have commenced his operations on the Malabar Coast and that by the capture of Bombay. The fact that a small French contingent had already been landed on the Coromandel Coast and had been carrying on operations in concert with Haidar Ali, had obliged him to disembark his expeditionary force there. Then the death of Haidar, the absence of Tipu from the coast and the reduction of his troops prevented him from taking any immediate advance step with regard to beginning operations elsewhere. Moreover, before adopting any definite policy in that direction it was necessary to know the real intentions of the Marathas and of Nizam Ali and the existing state of affairs in their *Darbars*. It resulted from these difficulties that however much Bussy desired an alliance with the Marathas and Nizam Ali, he could not do anything for the time being without running the risk of being suddenly abandoned by Tipu; who might make his own terms with the English. He would be in a stronger position, however, to declare his policy openly after the arrival of de Soulanges with reinforcements.[2]

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[1] *Journal de Bussy*, pp. 354-356.

[2] *Ibid*, pp. 356-357.

At the same time Warnet also wrote to Montigny that it was the definite intention of Bussy to go to the Malabar Coast at the earliest favourable opportunity and that nothing but physical incapacity would make him give up the project. He added that he would be sent back to Poona immediately on the arrival of de Soulanges, with authority for Montigny to conclude a treaty with the Marathas, and till that time Montigny was to exercise all his prudence and skill to convince the Poona Government of the sincerity and earnestness of the French. Montigny was also to explore the possibility of concluding a wider pact between the French, the Marathas and Nizam Ali, giving only vague assurances for the time being and without committing himself to anything definite.[1]

That concludes the review of the diplomatic relations between Bussy and the Marathas, and nothing further was done for the whole period till the news of the conclusion of peace in Europe. In the chapter dealing with Montigny's diplomacy we have noticed the frantic letters written by the French agent at Poona to Bussy and the disappointment he suffered at the attitude of Bussy in cold-shouldering the Marathas while there was yet a chance of drawing them to the side of the French.

VI. *Relations with Nizam Ali.*

Of all the Indian Powers Bussy had a special preference for an alliance with the Nizam of Hyderabad. It was only natural, because the Deccan was the scene of his early operations, which had won for him great reputation both as a soldier and as a diplomat. Secondly, Hyderabad still constituted an important Power, whose co-operation would be of immense value in operations against the English. Finally, Bussy could count on the support of Nizam Ali, whose life had once been saved and who had been rescued from prison by his personal intervention. Thus on his arrival at Cuddalore Bussy wrote to Nizam Ali, to his principal minister, Nawab Tahawar Jang, and to Aumont, a French officer in his service, with a view to draw Hyderabad to the side of France and to induce that Power to begin operations against the English for the recovery of the four Northern Sarkars in their occupation. But situated as he was, with an inadequate force and entirely dependent on Tipu for supplies of provisions and means of transport, Bussy could do little more than give just a vague assurance of French support. There was no concrete proposal of any military alliance or any plan of combined operations against the English. Under the circumstances he could not have surely expected that Nizam Ali would take any rash action against a formidable Power like the English without any definite assurance of military support from the French. In fact, apart from the general instructions given to Montigny to explore the possibility of a Franco-Maratha-Hyderabad alliance, Bussy showed little anxiety or seriousness to draw Nizam Ali into a war with the English. Perhaps, he had hoped that after the arrival of the expected reinforcements and some initial French successes against the English, Nizam Ali would have better inducement to join the French openly, and in the meantime all that could be done was to keep him on friendly terms so as to prevent his joining the English against the French and Tipu.

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[1] *Journal de Bussy,* pp. 357-358.

In his letter to Nizam Ali, dated 28th March, Bussy informed him that he had received a copy of the letter written by him to Montigny at Poona and that he felt extremely happy to know his desire "to renew the old relations which have continued since such a long time back between France and the House of Nizam-ul-mulk." Bussy next confirmed what he had written in a letter sent through de Launay, announcing his arrival in the Isle of France, that he had been sent by the King of France with large forces to drive the English from India and to restore the territories lost by the Indian Princes. He had on arrival in India received reports about Nizam Ali's friendly feelings for the French from Montigny and Aumont, in whom he asked Nizam Ali to repose complete confidence. He knew Aumont who had once served under him. Bussy then asked Nizam Ali not to listen to the proposals of the English, nor to give them any help. The instructions he had received from the King enjoined on him giving military help to Nizam Ali for the recovery of the four Northern Sarkars from the hands of the English. He finally exhorted him to send his troops at once to recover the Sarkars or, failing that, at least to prevent the English from drawing any money or provisions from there.[1]

Bussy wrote at the same time to Nawab Tahawar Jang, the principal minister of Nizam Ali, expressing great satisfaction at the reports of Montigny and Aumont about his attachment to the French nation. He urged Tahawar Jang to prevail upon Nizam Ali not to listen to any proposals that might be made by the English and to assure him of French military support for the recovery of the four Northern Sarkars.[2] To Aumont also Bussy wrote on the same date, acknowledging receipt of the letters he had sent by way of Poona and expressing deep satisfaction over the *démarches* he had made to win over Nizam Ali to the side of the French. Bussy informed Aumont of the contents of his letter to Nizam Ali and asked him to repeat the assurance contained in the Royal Instructions about French military help being offered to all the Indian Princes for the recovery of their lost territories from the hands of the English. Aumont was to urge upon Nizam Ali not to listen to the proposals of the English, and as a mark of friendship for the French to give orders to the governors of all his provinces not to allow the English to draw any help from there. Bussy advised Aumont to proceed very cautiously and not to give any details till the real intentions of Nizam Ali were known. He was not to proceed too far about giving assurance of French military support without positive orders from Bussy. For the time being he was merely to try to persuade Nizam Ali to take the field against the English on his own account for the recovery of the four Northern Sarkars.[3]

VII. *Relations with the Mughal Emperor,*

There remained the Emperor of Delhi as the only other Power with whom it was worthwhile for the French to negotiate. It may be recalled that long before the outbreak of war in Europe several projects centring round an alliance with the Emperor had been submitted to the Government in Paris. But

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[1] P. A. ms. 501; also *Journal de Bussy,* pp. 351-352.
[2] P. A. ms. 499; also *Journal de Bussy,* p. 352.
[3] P. A. ms. 502; also *Journal de Bussy,* pp. 352-353.

Bussy, who did not know north India from personal experience and who was suspicious of the bonafides and veracity of Chevalier and Madec, appeared all through sceptical of the utility of an alliance with the Mughal Emperor. All his previous *mémoires* bring out clearly his attitude on this subject. He was thus never very eager to take up seriously negotiations with the Court of Delhi, and became even less so when on his arrival at Cuddalore he learnt through Montigny's letters of the death of Najaf Khan, the only strong man in that Court who could have given some little effective help to the French.[1] So all that he thought necessary in the case of the Emperor was to send him a letter, couched in vague and general terms, through Montigny who was charged with maintaining diplomatic relations with the Courts of Delhi and Hyderabad besides that of Poona. It was dated 17th April.[2] Bussy wrote to the Emperor that he had received a copy of the letter sent to Montigny, in which the Emperor had expressed his readiness to join the French to "destroy the English power in India." He then stated that he had been sent by the King of France with 10,000 European troops and 20 warships to drive the English out of India and to reinstate the Indian Princes in their lost territories. He had already landed on the Coromandel Coast and was shortly marching against the English. He begged the Emperor not to enter into any negotiations with the English and assured him of French military support in accordance with the instructions of the King. He hoped to send Montigny soon to the Court of Delhi to lay before him all the details, and he begged the Emperor to repose complete confidence in Montigny. For the rest, Bussy simply asked Montigny to inform him about developments at the Court of Delhi from time to time.[3] It may be noted that the outbreak of dissensions among the lieutenants of Najaf Khan for succession to his position completely destroyed what little prospect there might have been to induce the Court of Delhi to take a decided policy with regard to an alliance with France.

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[1] *Journal de Bussy*, p. 340.

[2] P. A. ms. 514; N. A.—*Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, VI, Nos. 833 and 835, also see No. 832 (letters from Nawab Amirul Umara of Arcot to Mahdi Quli Khan) and No. 834 (letter of Montigny to the Emperor).

[3] *Journal de Bussy*, p. 358.

CHAPTER XIII

THE WAR IN THE CARNATIC

I. *Difficulties facing Bussy.*

Having noticed Bussy's diplomatic overtures to the various Indian Powers, let us next turn our attention to the military situation from March to the end of June, when news arrived about the conclusion of peace in Europe. Fortunately for us, most authentic documents are available in the reports sent by Bussy to the Ministers, Marquis de Castries, Marquis de Ségur and Comte de Vergennes,[1] and in the letters exchanged between Bussy and de Suffren.[2] The situation facing Bussy on his arrival in India was bad enough to discourage any commander of an expeditionary force, and in order to explain the ultimate lack of success of the French army it is hardly necessary to put undue emphasis on the old age and supposed timidity and indolence of Bussy, as Roux and, following him, Malleson have done.

In the first place, the French lacked a secure base on the coast. Cuddalore was a rather unfortunate choice, and Duchemin would have done better, as suggested by de Suffren, to attempt the capture of Negapatam, which would have provided the French army with a more secure base. As it was, the French position was wholly indefensible against an attack by a superior force. Cuddalore was surrounded by a weak and low wall, which could be easily scaled. There were thirteen or fourteen bastions, small and almost crumbling and situated at a great distance from one another. Nor was there even an ordinary ditch round the place.[3] It was in such a defenceless base that the first expeditionary force had landed numerous pieces of heavy artillery and large quantities of munitions, a fact which Bussy regretted deeply. When during his stay in the Isle of France he heard of Haidar's intention to leave the Carnatic, his greatest anxiety was about the safety of the artillery and munitions stored at Cuddalore, and he at once sent out instructions to transfer them to Ceylon if Haidar really left the coast.[1] But nothing was done at the time, since Haidar did not actually leave; and when Bussy came, it was his concern about the fate of the small French contingent under Hoffelize and the safety of the artillery and munitions stored at Cuddalore which made him decide to land his expeditionary force there, and not at some place to the north of Madras as he had originally contemplated.[2] In his detailed report to Castries on the military operations in India, while referring to the weakness of Cuddalore as a base, Bussy deeply regretted that the first expeditionary force had not followed the advice of de Suffren and seized the neighbouring temple of Chidambaram, a "post infinitely better as a military base, very strong by itself, and capable of being further strengthened by all the extra-works that one would have liked to add."[3]

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[1] P. A. mss. 402, 406 to 409.

[2] *Ibid,* mss. 582 to 634.

[3] *Ibid,* ms. 332—*Notes sur Goudelour,* 1782 (an anonymous account written for the information of the French army for an attack on Cuddalore).

In the second place, Bussy found himself with forces wholly inadequate to carry on independent operations against the English. If Tipu had been in the Carnatic, the small French expeditionary force, joined with the Mysore army, could have taken the field against the English with boldness and some hope of success. But as it was, the French were left entirely to their own resources, and even the nominally large detachments of cavalry and infantry, left by Tipu under the command of Sayyid Sahib for co-operation with the French, suddenly deserted them on a rather flimsy pretext and moved south. The defection of Sayyid Sahib deprived the French of a useful cavalry arm, which would have turned the scale in their favour, as will be noticed later, by stopping the march of the English army on Cuddalore. Bussy realised the importance of an Indian infantry force to counteract the sepoy force of the English, and soon after his landing he passed orders for raising five sepoy battalions of 1,000 each, to be trained and officered by Europeans, each sepoy battalion being attached to one of the five European regiments.[1] It was, however, hardly to be expected that the French would be allowed sufficient time to raise and train up an entirely new force, and when the English moved against Cuddalore Bussy had at his disposal just 2,000 sepoys.[2] As regards European troops, Bussy had under him about 2,500 men, besides the first expeditionary force, now reduced to a bare few hundred. Against these numbers, as Bussy wrote in his report to the Minister, the English could put into the field 3,000 European troops, 12,000 to 14,000 sepoys and 1,500 cavalry with 84 cannons of different calibres. They had, besides, 500 Europeans and 3,000 sepoys for the defence of Madras and a reserve of 150 Europeans and 1,000 sepoys at the Great Mount.[3] There was even more inequality in naval strength. The junction of Bikerton's squadron with that of Hughes had given the English 18 ships of the line, besides a large number of frigates and transport vessels, all in perfect condition. The French had, on the other hand, only 15 ships of the line, some of them undergoing repairs at Trinkomali, and there was such a grave depletion in personnel that they could not face a naval action without a reinforcement of 1,800 men, which it was impossible for Bussy to spare from his own force.

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[1] *Journal de Bussy*, p. 106.

[2] P. A. ms. 399 (Bussy's letter to Castries, 31st March 1783).

[3] *Ibid*, ms. 402 (Bussy's letter to Castries, 9th September 1783). It may be observed here that the French did perceive the importance of Chidambaram and did occupy it for some time but were ultimately thrown out on the orders of Haidar (Letter of David Philips, taken prisoner by the French—Sec. Sel. Com. Proc., Fort William, 29th April, 1782; Forrest—*Selections from Letters, Despatches etc., Foreign Department*, III, pp. 860-862). A forcible occupation of the temple would have at once broken off the alliance with Haidar and would have perhaps led to worse consequences.

The third difficulty of Bussy arose from lack of money, provisions, and transport for artillery. Before starting from France Bussy had wanted to be supplied with a net amount of ten million livres to meet the expenses of his operations after his arrival in India. But the French Minister came to an understanding with the delegates of the Dutch East India Company in Paris with regard to the defence of its possessions in the East, and in place of giving Bussy ten millions in cash he gave only half the amount in cash and the other half in bills drawn on the Dutch authorities at Batavia and in Ceylon. We have seen already how greatly disappointed Bussy was when on his arrival in India he learnt from de Launay about the refusal of the Dutch authorities to honour the bills. Bussy thus suddenly found his financial resources reduced to five million livres, which even at a most moderate calculation could carry him through for not more than five months. Moreover, even these meagre resources were saddled with previous liabilities, the obligations to meet the arrears of salary due to the troops under Duchemin (and later under Hoffelize) and to reimburse the advances made by de Suffren to the army. In these embarrassing circumstances all that Bussy could do was to take his officers into confidence and to pass orders for the payment of only a part of the salaries in cash and the rest in bonds to be honoured later.[1] It was a most unwise arrangement made by the Minister for financing an expeditionary force, to depend on the uncertain co-operation of an ally, and one can quite understand the deep chagrin that Bussy felt when he suddenly found the arrangement upset on his arrival in India.

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[1] P. A. ms. 508.

[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 402.

[3] *Ibid.* About the strength of the English army under Stuart, Wilks gives the following numbers: Europeans—2945; Sepoys—11,545; the arrival of reinforcements from England increased the number of Europeans to 3500—*History of Mysoor,* II, p. 181.

Bussy suffered a similar disappointment with regard to provisions and transport for his artillery, for which he had counted entirely on the co-operation of the Nawab of Mysore. The Carnatic had been so thoroughly devastated by Haidar that even with money it was impossible for the French to procure adequate provisions for the army, or means of transport for the artillery. Bussy wrote several pressing letters to Tipu and the latter gave repeated assurances of having sent orders to his officers to supply all the requirements of the French army. But either because of the unfriendliness of Sayyid Sahib or because of secret instructions given by Tipu himself, as Bussy strongly suspected, the French were left without any provisions and transports. In a letter to Castries, dated 31st March, Bussy wrote with regret, "We do not have even a single bullock to drag a mere one-pounder, and the chief of the troops that the son of Haidar Ali had left to M. d'Hoffelize at the time of his departure has separated himself from d'Hoffelize under various pretexts; so that we are absolutely without any provisions and without any means to put the army on march."[1]

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[1] *Journal de Bussy*, pp. 343-348.

In view of the difficulties recounted above,—the insecurity of the base, the inadequacy of military and naval strength, the lack of money, provisions and transport for artillery, and most of all the little prospect of getting any immediate co-operation from any Indian ally, Bussy had perforce to be on the defensive for the time being. He was eagerly expecting the imminent arrival of reinforcements under Soulanges, which would double the army under his command and make the fleet at least equal to that of the English.[2] He therefore thought it prudent not to risk his small army in any offensive operation against the English, which was further rendered impossible by lack of transport for his artillery, but to follow a waiting game and stand on the defensive till the arrival of reinforcements which would enable him to take the field with confidence. Considering the circumstances, an impartial historian cannot but approve, at least in a general way, the policy adopted by Bussy; and it is rather surprising therefore to find Roux and, following him, Malleson, both showing such great capacity for impartial judgment, condemning Bussy in the severest language possible for his timidity and lack of enterprise in adopting a defensive policy.

Referring to Bussy, Roux wrote: "The old Governor of the Deccan, the military genius under Salabat, the illustrious lieutenant of Dupleix was now but an old man, gouty and worried, ignorant of the new politics and of the real situation of the belligerent powers. His talents and his proverbial enterprise had been lost during a repose of 22 years in the midst of his immense riches..The vanity of this general..........was bound to have grave consequences which could not always be remedied by the genius of de Suffren."[1] Again he wrote: "Instead of following the counsel of Bailli de Suffren and of other experienced officers who had advised him to take the offensive in a daring way and to occupy the strong position of Permacoil before General Stuart could seize it, Bussy, resuming the old oriental practices, kept himself invisible in his camp like a rich Náwab. What a contrast in the eyes of our soldiers, between this indolent conduct of the Marquis and the indomitable activity of de Suffren, whom the Minister had very unwisely placed under his orders, and specially the rapidity of action of Tipu Saeb, whose triumphs could not rouse among the French the spirit of emulation, gone to sleep for ever."[2]

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[1] P.A. ms. 399.

[2] The first two attempts to send a convoy under Soulanges in December 1781 and April 1782 were frustrated by the English, as noticed already. Not discouraged, the Minister of Marine informed Bussy of his intention to make another attempt, but it was not actually done.

Taking his inspiration from Roux, whose influence is unmistakable, Malleson wrote: "But the Bussy who returned to India in 1783 was no longer the hardy warrior who had electrified southern India in the years between 1754 and 1760; who had made of the Subadar of the Dekhan a French prefect, and whose capacity to dare had supplied the want of soldiers. If the Bussy of 1756, by his genius, his activity, his daring, his success, foreshadowed in some respects the illustrious warrior who just forty years later displayed the same qualities to conquer Italy, the Bussy of 1783, corrupted by wealth, enervated by luxury, and careful only of his ease, more resembled that scion of the House of Bourbon, once his sovereign, who consecrated all his hours to his mistresses, who left the nomination of the generals of the armies of France to a de Pompadour and who banished a Choiseul on the requisition of a du Barry! Bussy, then, instead of acting with vigour, did nothing. He did not even show himself to his men. He kept himself, to borrow the language of one of his countrymen, 'invisible in his tent like a rich Nabob'. Instructed by Colonel d'Offelize of the advance of the English, and informed by that officer that he pledged himself to maintain his force at Permacol, if he were but supported, Bussy not only refused, but abandoned every outlying fortification and fell back within Kadalur."[3]

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[1] Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, p. 177.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 184-185.

[3] Malleson—*Final French Struggles in India and on the Indian Seas*, pp. 63-64.

Anybody who goes through the original records connected with Bussy's expedition cannot but regard such sweeping observations as unjustified and not based on facts. The only explanation for such a dogmatic condemnation of Bussy is that Roux, the admiring biographer of de Suffren, deliberately painted Bussy black so that his own hero might shine all the more in contrast; and similarly Malleson, in his excessive zeal to do justice to the rivals of his own countrymen in India, sought to explain away their failure in 1783 by attributing it wholly to the character and conduct of Bussy.

II. *The English army marching on Cuddalore.*

Till the end of March Bussy was left in the dark about the English plan of operations. He sent a spy to Madras on the 20th, who returned on the 31st and reported that the English army was encamped to the west of the Great Mount and consisted of 10,000 sepoys and a little over 2,000 European troops with 78 pieces of artillery and a large number of transports. The spy had visited the camp on the 26th and had heard it rumoured that the army was going to march on Cuddalore.[1] It was not, however, till about the end of April that the English forces were ready to move. By that time their fleet, much strengthened by the junction of Bikerton and Hughes, had arrived at Madras, thus rendering possible combined operations against Cuddalore. There had also arrived some reinforcement of troops from England, and Sir Eyre Coote was again sent down from Bengal to assume command. Coote, however, met with a tragic end. His ship, the *Resolution,* was chased by some French frigates, and the fear of being captured by the enemy gave him such a shock that he had a stroke and died immediately after landing at Madras.[2] The command of the English army thus remained with Stuart.

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[1] *Journal de Bussy,* pp. 361-362. The English army, when it started from Madras, numbered 2,945 Europeans and 11,545 sepoys. It received a reinforcement later at Cuddalore which increased the number of Europeans to 3,500 (Wilks—*History of Mysoor,* II, p. 181).

[2] Forrest—*Selections from Letters, Despatches, etc., Foreign Dept., Government of India;* III, pp. 943-945; Love—*Vestiges of Old Madras,* III, pp. 247-248.

On the 21st April Stuart began to move south. Proceeding slowly, he occupied Chingleput, where he halted for a few days to replenish his stocks of provisions. It was, however, evident that his intention was to move next to Permacoil and occupy that strong position. The French had at the time a small detachment under d'Houdelot at Tindivanam, near Permacoil, as an advanced post for observing the movements of the English. D'Houdelot was an intrepid officer, and in order to forestall the English he begged Bussy to send him some reinforcement to occupy Permacoil. For his refusal to accept the advice of d'Houdelot, Bussy has been rather unjustly blamed by historians like Roux. But being in command of the operations, Bussy had to take stock of the resources at his disposal and to examine all the possibilities of the situation before taking any forward move. The detachment under d'Houdelot consisted of 616 men only, 180 volunteers, 36 hussars and 400 sepoys. The rest of the French forces Bussy had organised in two Brigades,—the Brigade d'Acquitaine, consisting of 1,400 Europeans and 850 sepoys, and the Brigade d'Austrasie, consisting of 1,300 Europeans and 900 sepoys.[1] With such a small number of men at his disposal, would it have been wise on the part of Bussy to allow his advanced detachment to take a forward move and occupy Permacoil, far away from the base at Cuddalore? If, as seemed quite likely, the detachment had been cut off and destroyed by the English, it would have further reduced the strength of the French army, and then the whole blame would have been thrown on Bussy. Under the circumstances, it would have been unwise for a commander to divide the forces under him and send stray detachments to far distant forward positions. On the other hand, military expediency dictated that all the available forces should be concentrated at a particular place to offer stubborn resistance to an enemy superior in number.

Thus in place of consenting to a forward move, as the

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[1] P.A. ms. 402. In this re-organisation Comte d'Hoffelize was appointed second-in-command, the Brigade d'Acquitaine was placed under Comte de la Marck, and the Brigade d'Austrasie under Baron d'Albignac. Each of the Brigades was equipped with 8 field-pieces and d'Houdelot's detachment with 3. The artillery park at Cuddalore was placed under the command of Sennarmont. The composition of the two Brigades is

English began to march towards Permacoil, Bussy ordered the advanced detachment to fall back on Vilnoor near Pondicherry, and to remain there purely as an observation post. The English occupied Permacoil on the 9th May and set about repairing the fort and laying in stocks of provisions and munitions. As their intention to march on Cuddalore became quite clear, Bussy wrote pressing letters to Sayyid Sahib to rejoin him with his forces, numbering 10,000 men, including both cavalry and infantry. Fortunately for him, Sayyid Sahib responded to the summons and promptly came to Cuddalore to join the French. It was a great relief to Bussy who needed a cavalry force very badly. A small detachment of horse was promptly sent to the assistance of d'Houdelot. The reinforcement encouraged d'Houdelot once more to think of bold moves, and it was with great difficulty that Bussy could restrain his intrepidity and bring him to a realisation of the military situation. In a letter dated 24th May he had to warn d'Houdelot in the following terms: "You must not at all consider your detachment at the moment as the vanguard of the army, nor even as a fighting corps, but simply as an advanced post to collect information about the movements of the enemy and to withdraw the moment he begins to march on us.. Otherwise, I shall not hesitate a moment to recall the whole force here, it being not possible to send you more men."[1]

A few days later, on the news of the English advance towards Koliyanur, Bussy ordered d'Houdelot's detachment to fall back

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given below:

Brigade d'Acquitaine		Brigade d'Austrasie	
Sepoy battalion of Acquitaine	450 men	Sepoy battalion of Royal Roussillon	450 men
Sepoy battalion of la Marck	400 men	Sepoy battalion of Austrasie	450 men
Second battalion of Acquitaine	600 men	Second battalion of Royal Roussillon	300 men
First battalion of la Marck	450 men	First battalion of Austrasie	500 men
Second battalion of la Marck	350 men	Second battalion of Austrasie	500 men
	2,250 men		2,200 men

[1] Martineau—*Bussy et l'Inde Française*, pp. 354-355.

on the Ponnaiyar river, the last line of defence for Cuddalore.[1] Bussy decided to hold this line against the enemy. He constructed a battery of six pieces at the mouth of the Ponnaiyar and formed his troops in a line along the southern bank of the river, keeping the contingent of Sayyid Sahib at the left. The river Ponnaiyar served as a quite secure line of defence. Although it remained practically dry in the month of June, the sandy bed was sufficiently wide and the little stream of water passing through it sufficiently deep to make fording difficult for an army with artillery and baggages, specially if the other side was held securely by the enemy. The French right stretched towards the sea up to a point where the river was not at all fordable, and the left was protected by a high embankment, where Bussy placed an advanced post to watch the movements of the enemy.

On the 2nd June the English army came up to the river and formed a line along the northern bank parallel to the French. But the quick eye of Stuart at once detected the impossibility of crossing the river at that point, and in order to turn the left flank of the French he marched his army towards west and encamped at Vellapakkam. The French also made an analogous movement and came to rest their right flank on the Ponnaiyar river and to turn their left flank south-westwards to rest on the hill of Bandapollam in order to present a straight front to the enemy. The English suddenly moved further to the west, and without the French knowing it in time they crossed the river Gadillam on the 6th June at eight in the morning. If the French had a body of good cavalry, they could have easily prevented the crossing and could have attacked the English army at an advantage. But they failed to make any use of this opportunity, not because, as Roux says, of the timidity of Bussy,[1] but because of the lack of co-operation on the part of Sayyid Sahib, who refused to supply any cavalry to intercept the English. Bussy explained his difficulties in his report to the Minister, dated 9th September. "If only I had at my disposal 1,500 good cavalry I would have attacked it (the English army) at an advantage while crossing this river, but Sayyid Sultan Sahib was wholly opposed to moving his cavalry forward: the heat was excessive and it was impossible for our troops to arrive before midday at the spot where, if they could have arrived at nine o'clock, the rear guard of the enemy ran the risk of being cut off."[2]

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[1] In order to follow the movements of the two armies the following description of the environs of Cuddalore will be found useful. The principal river in the area is the Pennaiyar, rising in the State of Mysore and flowing due east across the South Arcot District. It falls into the sea about six miles north of the old Cuddalore town. It comes down in short floods which dry up again. During high floods the river spills over into the Malattar and from it into the Gadillam, which flows into the sea just south of Fort St. David. From Gadillam at the foot of Fort St. David there stretches a backwater along the eastern face of the old Cuddalore town, flowing into the sea just south of the town, at the mouth of the Uppanar. West of the old Cuddalore town is a low hill, only about a hundred feet above the sea, known as the Bandapollam Hill. Its modern name is Mount Capper and is within the present Cuddalore municipality. It is a part of the same line of hills to which the Red Hills just west of Pondicherry belong. The Bandapollam Hill figured many times in the wars of the eighteenth century. It may be recalled that after the capture of Cuddalore by the French in April 1782 the place was found so unhealthy that the army was encamped outside the town, at a place called Manjakuppam. Manjakuppam is about four miles to the north of the old Cuddalore town, being separated from it by the river Gadillam. It is now within Cuddalore municipality and is the official centre of the town (*Madras District Gazetteers—South Arcot*, I, for details. The volume contains two maps, one of Cuddalore town and the other of the whole district).

Once having crossed the river, the English army marched rapidly towards south-east, and turning the hill of Bandapollam took up its position on the 7th June to the south of Cuddalore, stretching in a line from the mouth of the Uppanar river to the eastern corner of the hill. It was a secure and advantageous position for the English. Their right flank was protected by the sea and they could feel secure of the support of their fleet, which anchored at the mouth of the river on the 8th and landed the recently arrived troops of the Hanoverian regiment, provisions and munitions. Their left flank was also effectively covered by a large grove of tall and leafy trees, which masked their movements from the enemy. On his side Bussy, as soon as he perceived the intention of the English to take up their position to the south of Cuddalore, made a corresponding movement of his own army, which formed a parallel line, facing the English at a distance of eight to nine hundred yards. The French line stretched from an elevated ground near the sea to the south-eastern side of the hill of Bandapollam. Thus both the flanks were fairly well protected. In order to secure the right flank more effectively Bussy posted the sepoys of Sayyid Sahib on the sloping face of the Bandapollam. To their left were placed 200 Europeans and 100 sepoys with 6 field-pieces under the command of Benth. The rest of the line, about a mile and a half in length, was occupied by the two Brigades of Austrasie and Acquitaine and d'Houdelot's detachment of volunteers. The artillery was distributed in the following way: at the left were raised two batteries, one of four pieces of 12-pounders and the other of four pieces of 8-pounders; to their right another battery of four pieces of 24-pounders, and at a short distance were placed 3 howitzers, the only ones that there were in the park; two more batteries of smaller pieces were set up at the left. Besides these, there was light artillery with each of the brigades. Bussy felt satisfied about the disposition of the forces, and in his report to the Minister, dated 9th September, he wrote, "The army in this position seemed to me to be quite capable of resisting the attacks of the enemies."[1]

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[1] Roux states that Boissieux, Major d'Austrasie, told Bussy: "Just one brigade will suffice, General, and the English will never return to Madras." Roux then comments, "The delay of the indolent Marquis saved the enemy from complete destruction." (*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, p. 188). Malleson repeats the incident, evidently taking it from Roux, and blames Bussy for missing such an opportunity. "He had arrived at a time of life when men no longer attack." (*Final French Struggles in India*, p. 65).

[2] P. A. ms. 402.

III. *Bussy's efforts to lay in stocks of provisions.*

Before turning to the military operations, let us notice very briefly the efforts made by Bussy to lay in stocks of provisions in order to face a prolonged siege at Cuddalore. We have already noticed his difficulties about procuring provisions due to lack of co-operation on the part of Sayyid Sahib, despite the assurances repeatedly given by Tipu. There was a stock-taking on the 16th April of the provisions in the stores, the result of which was quite discouraging.[1] So as soon as Bussy came to learn, about the end of April, that the English army had begun to move south, his first anxiety was to procure as much provisions from Pondicherry as possible while that town still remained free from English control and the communications between it and Cuddalore still remained open. The measure created a good deal of dissatisfaction among the citizens of Pondicherry, who did not like to see their town denuded of its stocks, but it was removed by an assurance from Bussy of returning equivalent quantities of provisions in future.[2] At the same time the return of Sayyid Sahib to Cuddalore facilitated the augmentation of stocks. Bussy took every possible precaution to secure the safety of the stores and to prevent any communication between the Indian inhabitants of the town and the English.[3]

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[1] P. A. ms. 402. Wilks paid tribute to the French General in the following words: "Monsieur Bussy proceeded with the skill and rapid execution which distinguish his nation, in covering, with the most judicious field works, the position which he had assumed."—(*History of Mysoor*, II, p. 186).

Bussy also wrote to de Suffren several letters during April and May giving him information about the movements of the English army and asking him to send at least two months' stock of provisions.[4] In a letter dated 10th April Bussy complained that not a grain of wheat or rice was allowed to enter Cuddalore by the Nawab's men and he urged de Suffren to send him provisions as quickly as he could.[5] In reply to an earlier letter of de Suffren, in which the latter had written that the fleet was more in need of money than of rice,[6] Bussy wrote, "we have on the contrary more need of rice at the moment than of money." In another letter, dated 22nd April, Bussy informed de Suffren that the English army was marching on Cuddalore and their fleet was also expected to arrive at the same time to lay a blockade before the place, against which he depended entirely on the co-operation of de Suffren, who could, by diverting the enemy fleet, enable supplies of provisions and munitions to reach Cuddalore.[1] Again on the 2nd May Bussy wrote to de Suffren about lack of provisions and munitions and urged him to come at once to prevent a blockade by the English fleet.[2] He repeated the summons on the 6th May,[3] but on the 15th, being reassured by the arrival of Sayyid Sahib, he changed his mind and advised de Suffren to remain at Trinkomali.[4] De Suffren on his side did all that he could to help the army at Cuddalore by sending large quantities of provisions,[5] and Bussy wrote to him on the 5th June that he had enough provisions and munitions to stand a prolonged siege.[6]

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[1] P. A: ms. 513.

[2] Martineau--*Bussy et l'Inde Française*, p. 354.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 355.

[4] The exchange of letters between Bussy and de Suffren (P. A. mss. 562-684) is very interesting and reveals a perfect understanding between the two over the common objective. It completely contradicts the supposition of Roux about strained relations between them.

[5] P. A. ms. 586.

[6] *Ibid.*, ms. 585.

IV. *The engagement of 13th June and the withdrawal of the French to Cuddalore.*

Let us now turn to the military operations before Cuddalore. We have already seen how the two armies took up their positions to the south of Cuddalore on the 7th. On the 8th the English fleet arrived before the place and landed troops, provisions, munitions and siege artillery. The next four days were spent in preparations. The French constructed some entrenchments before their camp and also some breastworks to keep their artillery under cover. Bussy had also another anxiety, about the large number of the sick, who were in hospital at Manjakuppam and who had to be quickly removed to Cuddalore for safety.[7] On the 12th the French prepared for action and the second battalion of Acquitaine went up to occupy an advanced position, its left resting on the *Fakir's tomb* where a battery of four pieces of 12-pounders had been set up, and the right resting on another battery of six pieces. The left flank and the centre were held securely, but the real weak spot was on the right. It will be remembered that the right flank rested on the slope of the Bandapollam hill, where Bussy had placed a body of Mysore sepoys under the charge of de Canaple, who thought that the post was quite secure and that the English would not be able to bring up their artillery there. Immediately to the left was the post occupied by Benth with 200 Europeans and 100 sepoys. The English at once detected the weak spot. They concentrated their fire on the Mysore sepoys, who fled away precipitately, leaving the slope of the hill to be occupied by the English. The latter brought up their artillery to the spot, during the night of 12th June, erected two batteries and rushed up several columns of infantry to hold the post securely and to enable a concentration of attack on the post occupied by Benth. Bussy, as soon as he came to know of the flight of the sepoys and the occupation of their post by the English, realised the danger of Benth's position. He visited the post at four in the morning of the 13th and reinforced it with a part of the regiment of Austrasie, sending information at the same time to Sayyid Sahib to come up to the spot at once with the whole body of his cavalry.

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[1] P. A. ms. 592.

[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 595.

[3] *Ibid.*, ms. 599.

[4] *Ibid.*, ms. 604.

[5] *Ibid.*, mss. 602, 605 and 608.

[6] *Ibid.*, ms. 610.

[7] Writing to de Suffren on the 30th May, Bussy complained of the ravages of dysentery among his troops and stated that 600 men were already in hospital (P.A. ms. 606).

The English began their attack on Benth's position at day-break, and under cover of their newly raised batteries tried to send up several columns of European troops, which were, however, repulsed. The French had a rather weak artillery on the right flank, consisting of two 18-pounder and four 8-pounder pieces, but it kept up a steady fire and inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy. About eight o'clock Bussy, realising that the English intended to concentrate their attack on the right flank, left only the second battalion of Acquitaine to hold the left and withdrew the two battalions of la Marck to the second line. The second battalion of la Marck was sent up to the right when it was noticed that several columns of English sepoys were making an attempt to turn the French line. The sepoys withdrew at once on the arrival of the reinforcement. There followed a heavy cannonade all along the line till half-past nine, when the English began to advance in several columns to seize the advanced post of Benth. They were received with a terrific artillery and musketry fire, but their advance could not be stopped. Benth was killed in action together with a large part of his men, and the rest fell back to the ground held by the Brigade d'Austrasie, which then moved forward and charged the enemy with bayonets. At the same time, perceiving that practically the entire English army had concentrated against the right flank, Bussy ordered the first battalion of la Marck to move forward and charge. The two battalions of Austrasie and the first battalion of la Marck succeeded in pushing the enemy beyond the post originally held by Benth, but after an hour's hard fighting they had to fall back on their previous position. The tide of the battle would have changed if the French had just 2,000 cavalry to assist them, but in spite of the pressing summons of Bussy, Sayyid Sahib, who lay encamped about five leagues from the place, remained totally inactive out of fear or treachery. About midday the English captured the post held by Benth. The rest of the day passed in mere exchange of fire, the troops on both sides were tired and worn out by the excessive heat, and when night fell the two armies went to rest on the field of battle.

Even after the setback of the 13th Bussy had intended to renew the fight next morning. But he changed his mind for two reasons. He had lost a large number of transport cattle, the only means of manœuvring his artillery, and the Indian keepers had fled away with the rest. Secondly, having suffered heavy casualties he could not afford to risk the remainder of the small army under him against a numerically superior enemy. So he thought it prudent to withdraw his forces to Cuddalore and stand a siege there. All through the night of 13th June the wounded were carried to the town and the artillery was also dragged off by troops, for want of transport cattle, with the exception of nine small pieces which had to be left behind. Early in the morning of the 14th the entire army retired within the walls of Cuddalore.

The action of the 13th had inflicted heavy casualties on both sides. There was a large-scale massacre and few prisoners were taken; on the English side only 6 officers and 25 men, and on the French side one officer and 10 men. Of the French forces the second battalion of Acquitaine had been entrusted with protecting the batteries on the left, and the second battalion of la Marck had been sent up to prevent an attempt by the English sepoys to turn the right flank. The main brunt of the attack of the English forces, consisting of nearly 3,500 Europeans and 11,500 sepoys, was thus borne by the two battalions of Austrasie, the second battalion of Royal Roussillon and the first battalion of la Marck, numbering in all 1,750 men. The French had 15 officers killed and 25 wounded, some of whom died subsequently. The losses on the English side, calculated from intercepted letters, numbered 64 officers and 2,000 sepoys killed and wounded.[1]

Having withdrawn within the walls of Cuddalore, Bussy started making hasty constructions to put the place in a better state of defence. But it was an impossible task, and in the face of the combined operations of the English army and navy the French could have done little to defend the place. Their only salvation lay in the arrival of de Suffren's fleet, which could relieve the pressure on Cuddalore by diverting the English squadron. Fortunately for them, at this critical hour, the intrepid sailor suddenly appeared before Cuddalore with his ships on the 15th to save the army once more from sure destruction.

V. *The French fleet at Trinkomali.*

At this point it is necessary to retrace our steps and see what de Suffren had been doing since his departure from Cuddalore in March after landing Bussy's expeditionary force there. De Suffren had to start back hastily from Cuddalore on the 23rd March, before even completing the disembarkation of artillery and munitions, for fear of meeting the reinforced English fleet expected to arrive on the coast any day. He, however, left Cuddalore with only a part of the squadron, sending four ships, the *Fendant* the *Saint-Michel,* the *Cléopatre* and the *Coventry*, to cruise off Madras for two weeks in order to intercept a large convoy from Europe expected at Madras shortly.[1] The return voyage of de Suffren to Trinkomali was unduly delayed by contrary winds, and it was not till 10th April that he came within sight of the place. A frigate, the *Bellone,* which had been sent in advance to explore the approach to the bay, signalled the presence of 23 ships. It was the English fleet returning from the western coast. In spite of the superior number and the position of the English ships de Suffren took a bold decision to make a dash for the port, which he hoped to gain before the enemy could come up and bar the way. The daring move was successful, and in the evening the French ships quietly anchored at the entrance to the bay. Next day they entered the port of Trinkomali safely, and the only losses they suffered were two small transport vessels which fell into the hands of the enemy.

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[1] The account of the engagement is based mainly on Bussy's report to the Minister, dated 9th Sept. (P.A. ms. 402); A.N.—Ministère de la Marine, B-4, vol. 268- (combats soutenus par les troupes français de Goudelour en Juin 1783); and the letter of General Stuart to the Madras Government, dated 15th June (Sec. Sel. Com. Proc, Fort William, 3rd July, 1783: Forrest—*Selections from Letters, Despatches, etc. Foreign Dept., Govt. of India*, III, pp. 973-975). See also Wilks—*History of Mysoor*, II, pp. 186-189. His comment on the result of the action deserves to be quoted: "The retirement of the French on the same night, within the walls of Cuddalore, evinced their sense of the operations of the day; but their being permitted during the night to draw off without molestation all their heavy guns from the exterior position, furnished equal evidence of the impression made on the English by a victory so dearly purchased."

The first anxiety of de Suffren after reaching Trinkomali was about the four ships which had been left behind to cruise off Madras and which were unaware of the coming of the English squadron. So on the 11th he sent a fast-moving boat, the *Naiade,* commanded by Villaret de Joyeuse, to warn the ships of the danger.[2] It was an extremely perilous mission, and de Joyeuse humorously observed whether de Suffren would give him, together with his instructions, letters of recommendation addressed to Lord Macartney and Sir Edward Hughes. The very next day the *Naiade* was chased by the *Sceptre,* and after a hard fight, lasting for more than five hours, the French ship surrendered. The heroic conduct of de Joyeuse so impressed the English that Hughes embraced him and remarked that he would willingly lose all his frigates at such a high price.[3] Fortunately, however, the four ships under Peinier gave up their cruise off Madras on the 13th, missing the English convoy escorted by the *Bristol* which arrived on the 14th, and just escaping the fleet of Hughes which arrived on the 15th. The *Fendant* was in fact chased by the enemy during the return voyage, but having superior speed it escaped and all the four ships reached Trinkomali safely on April 21/22.[1]

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[1] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* p. 237.

[2] *Ibid.,* pp. 244-245.

[3] Bussy to Suffren, May 2 (P. A. ms. 595); also Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* pp. 180-181.

Early in May de Suffren sent the *Coventry* to Cuddalore for information about the army. It returned on the 11th with letters from Bussy, who wrote that the English army was already on the march towards Cuddalore and that their navy was expected to arrive before the place to lay a blockade.[2] Even before that, Bussy had written to de Suffren about the possibility of the French army being blockaded at Cuddalore, and had asked de Suffren to come to its relief with provisions and munitions, in spite of the numerical inferiority of the French squadron to the English.[3] It was an extremely hazardous venture for de Suffren to face an action with the decidedly superior English fleet, but his courage and patriotism rose to the occasion at the news of the dangers threatening the army. He sent a letter by the *Coventry* on the 4th May, informing Bussy that in spite of the triple disadvantage in which his squadron stood, in respect of tonnage, number of ships and personnel, he would sail out of Trinkomali and face the English squadron if Cuddalore was attacked. He, however, asked Bussy to give him 1,500 men to replenish the deficiency in the personnel of his squadron.[4]

Bussy replied by the same boat on the 6th May that in spite of the inferiority of his squadron to that of the enemy de Suffren must come to Cuddalore at once, and that if he delayed "the army will be really exposed to the gravest dangers. Therefore, Monsieur, you must come out as soon as possible with your 15 ships. Three principal factors compel me to give you this order,—lack of provisions, inadequacy of munitions and the pernicious effect which your absence cannot fail to make on the minds of the enemies, of the allies, and of all the

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[1] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, pp. 246-248.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 247-248.

[3] P. A. mss. 592, 595, 597—letters, dated 22nd April, 2nd and 4th May.

[4] *Ibid.*, ms. 598.

Asiatics." He, however, informed de Suffren that he could not spare 1,500 men from his army and that all he could provide to replenish the deficiency in manpower of the squadron was the detachment of volunteers together with 500 to 600 sepoys.[1] On the 11th de Suffren replied to Bussy that he was making preparations with as much speed as possible to start for Cuddalore. He expected to leave Trinkomali on the 22nd and reach Cuddalore on the 25th.[2]

The next two weeks were taken up by hasty preparations. Repairs to some of the ships were hurriedly completed, and in order to man the ships of the line 250 Europeans and 300 sepoys were drafted from the garrison at Trinkomali and all the frigates and flûtes disarmed, with the exception of the *Cléopatre,* the *Coventry* and the boats which were to carry provisions and munitions. Even then the number did not come up to three-fourth of the total complement.[3] A few days later Bussy was joined by Sayyid Sahib, and feeling more secure he wrote to de Suffren on the 15th May not to leave Trinkomali. From the movements of the English army and navy he suspected that behind their apparent intention of laying siege to Cuddalore was the real intention of luring de Suffren out of Trinkomali with his weak squadron and forcing a battle on him before the arrival of the expected reinforcements. "A combat with three ships less . . . . . would reduce us for the rest of the campaign to our land forces only and consequently to little possibility of operations."[4]

But apart from this letter, de Suffren's departure for Cuddalore was delayed by the sudden appearance of the English squadron before Trinkomali on the 24th. De Suffren had only 10 ships under him fit for service, but he made a bold show and prepared for a combat. Next day the English ships sailed off towards Batticaloa. The movements of the English squadron appeared mysterious and de Suffren suspected that the real intention was to attack Trinkomali as soon as he left for Cuddalore. So he postponed his departure for the time being, but taking advantage of the absence of the English squadron sent provisions and artillery to Cuddalore by two transport vessels, escorted by the *Fendant,* the *Cléopatre* and the *Coventry.* He also wrote to Bussy to send him some men for the frigates.[1] Bussy replied on the 30th May, again asking de Suffren not to leave Trinkomali, except only in the case of Cuddalore being blockaded by the English army and navy. The preservation of the French squadron was of the greatest importance, and de Suffren was not to take any risk.[2] On the 31st the English ships reappeared before Trinkomali and remained there for two days, as if with an intention to attack. De Suffren again made a bold show with the few ships he had with him, but he was filled with anxiety about the ships sent to Cuddalore. He managed to send a small boat to warn Peinier of the movements of the English fleet. He wrote to Bussy on the 1st June, informing him of the reappearance of the English ships before Trinkomali. "If I had the *Fendant,* I would have moved out. As soon as it arrives, if you send me some men to provide for the defence of Trinkomali, I shall move out, because, besides the risk faced by the ships we are expecting back, it is painful to have to put up with the enemy's challenge everyday."[3]

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[1] P. A. ms. 599.

[2] *Ibid.,* ms. 601.

[3] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,*. pp. 249-250.

[4] P. A. ms. 604.

The last few words give the real motive which ultimately decided de Suffren to go to Cuddalore. It was not so much the wishes of Bussy, who wrote to him again on the 5th June not to leave Trinkomali and risk his squadron except when the army was in serious danger,[4] as the pride of a naval commander to take up the challenge of the enemy. The English ships left Trinkomali on the 2nd June and sailed off north to Madras. On the 10th the French ships which had been sent to Cuddalore earlier returned to Trinkomali. They had been chased by the English squadron on their way back, but they managed to escape.[5] Three days earlier, on the 7th, there arrived a small boat, the *Dromadaire,* which had accompanied Peinier's division to the Coromandel Coast, bringing the news of the critical position of the army at Cuddalore, which was facing the prospect of a siege by the English land and naval forces. The news of this great crisis determined de Suffren all the more to move out of Trinkomali and fight the English squadron to relieve Cuddalore. De Suffren only waited for the return of the three ships under Peinier, and as soon as they arrived on the 10th he called all the captains to a council of war, explained to them the critical position of the army, and informed them of his decision to leave at once for Cuddalore in spite of the decided inferiority of his navy. He spoke with great emotion about the sacred duty of saving the honour of the nation. His words evoked an enthusiastic response from the captains, who replied in one voice that the squadron must move out at once to save the army at Cuddalore and that they were prepared to face the risk of an action with the English fleet.[1]

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[1] P. A. ms. 605; *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* pp. 250-251; Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* pp. 185-186.

[2] P. A. ms.606.

[3] *Ibid.,* ms. 608.

[4] *Ibid.,* ms. 610.

[5] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* p. 255.

VI. *De Suffren's return to the Coromandel Coast.*

On the 11th June the squadron, consisting of 15 ships of the line, 3 frigates and a brûlot, sailed out of Trinkomali. It will be remembered that in order to make up for the deficiency in manpower, all the frigates, with the exception of three, had to be disarmed and their personnel distributed among the other ships. Even then and even with the addition of sepoys and lascars, the total personnel of the squadron hardly came up to three-fourth of the full complement. Many of the ships had not yet completed their repairs, and the *Illustre* and the *Saint-Michel* still leaked badly. It was in this state that the French squadron moved out to face an action with the English fleet, consisting of 18 ships of the line, all in perfect condition and having undergone thorough repairs at Bombay.[2]

On the 13th June the French came in sight of the English squadron, which lay anchored to the north of Porto Novo to assist the operations of the army under Stuart. At the sight of the approaching enemy squadron, Hughes, rightly considering that the principal object of the campaign was the capture of Cuddalore, moved his ships further to the north and anchored before that place. On the 14th, as the French ships approached closer, de Suffren gave orders to form into battle line, himself passing on board the frigate, *Cléopatre*, in pursuance of a recent Royal Order that the commander of a fleet must be on a frigate and not on a ship of the line during an action. The object was to ensure the safety of the commander, and the order was issued following the capture of Comte de Grasse in American waters. De Suffren positively disliked giving up his position in the front line of battle, but he had to obey the Royal Order.

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[1] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, pp. 254-255; see also Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, pp. 190-191.

[2] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, pp. 255-256.

De Suffren had intended to draw the English squadron to an immediate action, but for two days he was prevented by contrary winds from getting closer to the enemy who lay quietly anchored before Cuddalore. It was not till the 16th June that the wind changed its direction and enabled the French fleet to approach the enemy ships at anchor. Perceiving the resolute determination of the French to join action, Hughes thought it necessary to accept the challenge, and in order to get the advantage of the wind for his ships to bear down on the enemy, he left the safe anchorage before Cuddalore and moved out to the open. But he was disappointed in his expectations; the wind did not favour his manœuvres; on the other hand, the French ships made a resolute dash for the coast, and in the evening quietly anchored at the same spot which had been abandoned by the English just a few hours earlier.[1] This brilliant manœuvre, by which de Suffren dislodged a superior fleet from its advantageous position without firing a shot, has been justly admired by Malleson in the following terms: "It is impossible to speak in terms of too high commendation of this display of combined genius and daring. To beat on the open sea a fleet of equal or of greater numbers is no doubt a splendid achievement; but it is an achievement in which the lower nature of man, that which is termed brute force, has a considerable share. But to gain all the effect of a victory without fighting, to dislodge an enemy superior in numbers from a position of vital importance without firing a shot—that indeed is an exercise of the highest faculties of man's higher nature, a feat of intellectual power not often bestowed, but generally combined, when given, with that strength of nerve which knows when and how to dare."[1]

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[1] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, pp. 257-263; Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, pp. 192-193; Wilks—*History of Mysoor*, II, pp. 191-192.

By sheer audacity de Suffren had gained his objective, namely to dislodge, at least temporarily, the superior enemy fleet from its advantageous position before Cuddalore and to establish contact with the besieged army. Two results followed from this success. First, the English military operations were seriously dislocated by the disappearance of the fleet from the coast before completing the landing of provisions and munitions. Second, de Suffren could now expect to replenish the deficiency of his personnel by drawing men from the army for the time being; and with that reinforcement he could face an action with the superior enemy fleet with more confidence. De Suffren clearly realised that of the two enemy forces threatening Cuddalore one had to be destroyed first before the other. If he landed men from the ships to reinforce the army to attack the enemy land forces, it would dangerously expose his squadron to an attack by Hughes. The better course was to draft some men from the army, and with this added strength to go out and destroy the English fleet first; and then the army could be reinforced by the men of the squadron to attack the English land forces under Stuart. Bussy also agreed with this view and willingly lent troops for the naval operations, so necessary for the safety of the army.

It is interesting to note from the correspondence between Bussy and de Suffren the perfect understanding that existed between the two. On the night of the 16th June Bussy wrote to de Suffren giving him an account of the action of the 13th. The army was in a perilous state, shut up within Cuddalore, "where we are sure to succumb physically sooner or later." The only hope of deliverance was if de Suffren could win a naval victory and then take on board the sick and the wounded, which would enable Bussy as a last resort to make a large-scale sortie and take the rear of the English line. "Otherwise there would be no other recourse for us but to embark and go to

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[1] Malleson—*Final French Struggles in India*, pp. 68-69.

Trinkomali."[1] On the 17th de Suffren replied to Bussy that in spite of the inferiority of his squadron in the number of ships and their condition as well as in personnel, he fully agreed that it was necessary to win a naval victory to save Cuddalore, and he requested Bussy to send him as many men as he could to replenish the deficiency in the personnel of the squadron.[2] Bussy promptly offered 600 Europeans and 600 sepoys, explaining, "it is all that is possible for me to do unless I embark myself with the whole army and thus leave India altogether."[3] The troops were hurriedly embarked on the 18th June and de Suffren wrote to Bussy that with these reinforcements he could now hope for success. If he could defeat the English squadron, he would return to Cuddalore and give Bussy all the assistance he could to meet the land forces of the enemy. If on the other hand he was defeated, and if after a heroic resistance the army was forced to capitulate, Bussy should demand, as the first article of capitulation, to be transported to Trinkomali. "As long as we have this place, we shall have some existence at least in Indian waters."[4]

VII. *The last naval action* (*20th June*).

After hurriedly embarking the additional men, the French ships sailed off on the 18th to draw the enemy fleet into action. But for two days the latter, which was manœuvring to the south-east of Porto Novo, avoided an engagement. Hughes had two reasons for it. First, although his squadron was superior in number, it was badly deficient in personnel, having suffered the loss of about 3,000 men by scurvy in a little over a month's time, and it lacked in supplies of fresh water also.[5] But the second and the more important reason was that he wanted to manœuvre into a position from where he could attack the French squadron with the advantage of the wind in his favour. That was the reason why he left his anchorage before Cuddalore on the 16th, and why he repeatedly avoided an action with the French fleet on the 18th and the 19th, when the wind was in the enemy's favour. On the other hand, although the wind was in their favour, the French could not force a battle on the English, whose superiority in number and speed enabled them to elude every time.[1] Hughes, however, got tired of fruitless manœuvrings, and despairing of getting the advantage of the wind he at last prepared to accept battle on the afternoon of the 20th, relying on the advantage of the superiority of his fleet.

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[1] P.A. ms. 611.

[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 613.

[3] *Ibid.*, ms. 614.

[4] *Ibid.*, mss. 615, 617. For an account of the squadron before Cuddalore, see also *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, pp. 263-267.

[5] Malleson—*Final French Struggles in India*, p. 70.

It was rather late in the day, about half-past four in the afternoon, that the action was joined. It was the fifth and the last naval action fought by de Suffren in Indian waters. On this occasion his squadron was decidedly inferior to the enemy's in the number of ships and of guns, 15 ships of the line with 1,008 guns as against 18 ships of the line with 1202 guns of the English; but this disadvantage was amply made good in another way. After successive changes of command occasioned by past experience of insubordination and wilful neglect of duty, for the first time all the ships were now in charge of officers on whom de Suffren could put implicit reliance. For the first time all the captains were men who had given ample proofs of their loyalty and devotion and could be safely trusted to obey orders. Even the two old officers, de St. Felix and du Chilleau, vied with each other in acts of heroism to efface the memory of their past misconduct. Such an advantage of unstinted support and co-operation from his subordinates de Suffren had never enjoyed before, and it was a pity that he should have come to have it only during the last naval action he was destined to fight in Indian waters,—an action which failed to be decisive, having commenced at the fag end of the day and being terminated by nightfall.[2]

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[1] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, pp. 267-272.

[2] Table of the two squadrons:

English	*French*
The Defence (74)—Newnham	*Le Sphinx* (64)—Du Chilleau
The Isis (50)—Holladay	*Le Brillant* (64)—Kersauson
The Active	*La Fine*
The Gibraltar (80)—Bikerton	*Le Fendant* (74)—Peinier
The Inflexible (64)—Chewind	*Le Flamand* (50)—de Salvert
The Exeter (64)—Smith	*L'Ajax* (64)—Mancelière

At the commencement of the action, the *Flamand* (50), belonging to the front section, advanced close to the English line in an attempt to turn it. It was at once caught between two fires by the *Exeter* (64) and the *Inflexible* (64), and a torrent of shells poured upon it. The young and intrepid captain, de Salvert, was killed, but thanks to the courage and pluck of his able lieutenant, Trublet de Villejegu, the ship was able to extricate itself from its perilous position and rejoin the French line between the *Fendant* and the *Ajax*. In the centre of the line the *Héros* (74), commanded by de Moissac, showed itself worthy of the affection of de Suffren. Aided by the *Illustre* (74), it kept three enemy ships engaged, the *Superb* (74), the *Monarca* (70) and the *Burford* (70), while the *Argonaute* (74) and the *Petit-Annibal* (50) fought against the *Sultan* (74) and the *Africa* (64). In the rear section the *Vengeur* (64) replied to the fire of the *Magnanime* (64), and the *Hardi* (64) resisted valiantly the attacks of the *Bristol* (50) and the *Monmouth* (64) and forced them to keep at a respectful distance. In the front section the *Fendant* (74), after having put out of action the *Inflexible* (64), directed its attack against the *Gibraltar* (80), while the *Sphinx* (64) engaged the *Defence* (74). About half-past five there broke out a serious fire on the *Fendant*, which compelled Peinier to withdraw the ship for some time from the line of battle. The *Gibraltar* (80) at once dashed forward to capture the ship and to break the French line, but it was repulsed by the *Flamand*, an inferior ship with only 50

The Worcester (64)—Hughes
The Africa (64)—Macdonnel
The Medea
The Sultan (74)—Mitchell
The Superb (74)—Hughes
The Monarca (70)—Gell
The Burford (70)—Reiner
The Sceptre (64)—Graves
The Magnanime (64)—Mackenzie
The Eagle (64)—Clarke
The Hero (74)—King
The Bristol (50)—Rumey
The Monmouth (64)—Alms
The Cumberland (74)—Allen

La Cléopatre (de Suffren)
Le Petit-Annibal (50)—De Beaulieu
L'Argonaute (74)—De Clavières
Le Héros (74)—Moissac
L'Illustre (74)—Bruyères
Le St. Michel (60)—De Beaumont
Le Vengeur (64)—Cuverville
Le Sévère (64)—De Langle
L'Annibal (74)—D'Aymar
Le Hardi (64)—Kerhue
L'Artésien (64)—De Vignes
La Consolante (40)—Costebelle
Le Coventry

guns. The *Flamand* kept up a stubborn cannonade and succeeded in covering the *Fendant,* till the fire was put out, and compelling the *Gibraltar* to withdraw precipitately.

While the battle was raging furiously all along the line for nearly two and a half hours, de Suffren was watching and giving orders from his frigate in the rear, the *Cléopatre.* It caused him great mortification not to be on board his ship, the *Héros,* and in the thick of the battle, and nothing short of a peremptory Royal Order could have kept him away from the firing line. Even as it was, in his enthusiasm he risked his life several times and had to be respectfully reminded of the Royal Order by the captain of the frigate, de Rosily. About seven in the evening darkness came to separate the two fleets and to put a stop to the dreadful cannonade. It must have come as a great relief to Hughes, who had failed to utilise his numerical superiority to turn the enemy line and who welcomed the approach of night as an opportunity to withdraw his fleet from the scene of battle. Even before the withdrawal there was a sensible diminution of fire from the English ships, and but for the rather abrupt stoppage, the combat might have been turned into one of the most decisive naval actions. Even as it was, the victory remained with the French, not merely in the technical sense, as stated by Malleson and Wilks,[1] that they had succeeded in driving off the English fleet from Cuddalore, but also in a more real sense, in that the English fleet had suffered such heavy damage that it deliberately eluded being drawn into another action which the French sought for the next two days, and ultimately withdrew to Madras.

All through the night of the 20th June the French ships manœuvred to remain in the neighbourhood of Cuddalore, fearing a return of the English fleet, and keeping ready for a renewal of the fight next morning. The English ships had put out their lights to cover their withdrawal and evade pursuit, while the French ships were gradually drifted by currents as far north as Pondicherry. On the 21st at eleven in the morning the English ships were sighted to the south-south-east of the French, but they disappeared from view soon after. On the 22nd at five in the morning the English ships were sighted again to the east-north-east of the French, in a most disordered state. De Suffren wanted to chase them and draw them to another action, but by the time preparations for the pursuit were ready, the English ships, thanks to their superior speed, sailed off north and disappeared from view once more. De Suffren thought it fruitless to pursue an enemy who could always elude action by superior speed, and moreover he was anxious to return to Cuddalore at the earliest possible moment in order to assist Bussy in driving off the English army under Stuart.

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[1] Malleson—*Final French Struggles in India*, p. 72; Wilks—*History of Mysoor,* II, p. 193. The comment of Wilks on the result of the action may be quoted: "The English Admiral . . . . found the whole of his equipments so entirely crippled, his crews so lamentably reduced, and the want of water so extreme, that he deemed it indispensable to incur the mortification of bearing away for the roads of Madras, while Suffren, wresting from his enemies the praise of superior address, and even the claim of victory, if victory belongs to him who attains his object, resumed his position in the anchorage of Cuddalore."

De Suffren hastened to give an account of the naval combat in two letters to Bussy dated 21st June, in which he wrote: "In spite of our inferiority, the action is at least doubtful if not to our advantage. As long as the squadron will have powder and guns I will not abandon you." He also stated that contrary winds had prevented him from anchoring before Cuddalore, but that he would return at the earliest opportunity.[1] Bussy replied on the 22nd, offering congratulations to de Suffren, who was still before Pondicherry, and giving an account of the distress of the English army for lack of provisions after the departure of their squadron.[2] De Suffren thus thought it necessary to return to Cuddalore at once and concert measures for dislodging the besieging enemy force before that place. He sailed from Pondicherry early in the morning of the 23rd and anchored before Cuddalore at one o'clock in the afternoon. As he went ashore shortly after to meet Bussy, he was welcomed with a salute of 15 guns and with cries of "Vive le Roi", "Vive Suffren", by all the officers of the army who lined the coast and fought for the honour of carrying his palanquin. Bussy, who was waiting to receive him on the steps of his office, greeted him affectionately and taking his hand introduced him to his officers in the most flattering terms: "Gentlemen, here is our saviour." It was a proud tribute to the naval commander, who fully deserved it.[1]

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[1] P.A. mss. 620, 621.

[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 622.

VII. *The sortie of 24th June.*

De Suffren had succeeded in driving off one enemy from Cuddalore. There remained the other, the army under Stuart, to be dealt with. As we have seen, one of the principal reasons for de Suffren's hasty return to Cuddalore in place of seeking another, more decisive, action against the English squadron, was to concert measures with Bussy for a large-scale attack on the besieging force before Cuddalore, and to dislodge it from there. The English army, in spite of its nominal success on the 13th, was in great distress, as Bussy came to know from intercepted letters. The sudden disappearance of the squadron from the coast before completing the landing of provisions and munitions had completely dislocated the siege operations. Having suffered heavy losses in the action of the 13th and lacking provisions and munitions, Stuart could not venture any attack on the French shut up within Cuddalore. Giving up the idea of an offensive, for the next few days he occupied himself merely with entrenching his position more strongly for defence.[2] The news of the poor state of the English army encouraged Bussy to think of a large-scale attack. De Suffren agreed with him, and in order to reinforce the army he consented to land 1,200 men of the squadron besides the troops sent to him on the 18th.[1] Prudence, however, dictated that before taking the risk of a large-scale attack it was necessary to make a small-scale sortie with picked men to find out the strength of the enemy entrenchments and to ascertain whether it would be feasible at all to take the enemy position by a frontal assault. Bussy called a conference of his officers on the 24th to decide about the plan of operations and invited the opinion of de Suffren as well.[2]

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[1] For an account of the naval action of the 20th June and of events down to the return of de Suffren to Cuddalore on the 23rd: A.N.—*Ministère de la Marine*, B-4, vol. 268; *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren*, pp. 275-279; Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, pp. 194-200; Malleson—*Final French Struggles in India*, pp. 70-72; Richmond—*The Navy in India, 1763-1783*, pp. 355-375; letter of Hughes, dated 23rd June—Sec. Sel. Com. Pro., Fort William, July 21 (Forrest—*Selections from Letters, Despatches, etc., Foreign Dept.*, III, pp. 998-999).

[2] Bussy to de Suffren, June 22—(P.A. ms. 622); *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, pp. 279-280.

Regarding the plan of making a small-scale sortie instead of delivering a large-scale frontal assault, both Roux and following him as before, Malleson have passed severe strictures on Bussy and have suggested a sharp difference of opinion between him and de Suffren. Roux in his usual enthusiasm for his hero, de Suffren, states that he was sorely disappointed at the lack of courage and initiative on the part of Bussy and retired to his ship with a bitter observation, whether it was the intention of Bussy that he should take his ships ashore and fight the enemy there. Roux has poured ridicule on the small party sent out to make a sortie; he condemns Bussy for entrusting the command to "a vile intriguer of recognised incapacity", and considers the sortie to have been a total failure.[3] Malleson also condemns Bussy for his timidity and suggests a sharp difference of opinion with de Suffren.[4] But neither in the *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren* nor in the letters exchanged between Bussy and de Suffren is there the slightest trace of any bitterness of feeling between the two men. Nor is there any reason to suppose, if we examine the details from the letters of Bussy, that the plan of the sortie was either ill-conceived or that it was absolutely fruitless.

It was on the night of the 24th June that the sortie was made. The party consisted of 800 Europeans and 500 sepoys, under the orders of Chevalier de Damas, officer in command of the second battalion of Acquitaine. The plan was to march surreptitiously to the enemy entrenchments and to deliver an attack just before day-break. The party marched in three columns, Damas leading the centre, de la Rochethulon the left, and de la Borde the right. The enemy entrenchments were reached in time, but the attack was delivered by the central column rather prematurely. The enemy got fully warned and had time to offer resistance. The central column consisted of sepoys and marines, not accustomed to the discipline and order in an army. At the first sign of resistance by the enemy, Damas found himself abandoned by his men and was taken prisoner. The other two columns were more fortunate and were able to effect a safe withdrawal. The column of Rochethulon, which had advanced farthest and had a good view of the works of entrenchment, had even some moral consolation in being able to carry off two enemy standards. On the French side two officers were killed, three wounded and several taken prisoners. The casualties on the English side were heavier, the sepoys firing on their own men in the darkness and confusion. The sortie was apparently unsuccessful. but it had achieved one useful result. It led to the discovery that the enemy entrenchments were too strong to be taken by a frontal assault. The only way of delivering an attack on the enemy was to turn the line on its left, but it was an extremely hazardous venture because of the long distance and difficulty of the roads.[1]

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[1] The men were landed on the 24th, and it is interesting to note here that the author of the *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde* was appointed Aide-Major of the marines, p. 280.

[2] Bussy to de Suffren, June 24 (P.A. ms. 626).

[3] Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, p. 201.

[4] Malleson—*Final French Struggles in India*, p. 73.

IX. *News of the conclusion of peace in Europe.*

For the next four days both sides remained in comparative inactivity, excepting some occasional cannonades. Bussy, realising the impossibility of taking the enemy entrenchments by a frontal assault or of turning the left of the English line, thought it prudent to wait for some time more when he might get a better opportunity of attacking the English at an advantage. The army under Stuart was in great distress for lack of provisions. The presence of the French squadron had cut off communications with Tranquebar and Negapatam by sea, and the depredations of the cavalry of Sayyid Sahib had equally cut off communications with the north. The English were sure to raise the siege sooner or later, and then after they had abandoned their entrenched position, the French could attack them at an advantage.[1] De Suffren had also received information on the 25th about the arrival in the Isle of France of six Dutch ships and the Legion of Luxembourg.[2] With these reinforcements the French could expect to take the offensive with more confidence and better chance of success. But these hopes of taking the offensive were suddenly frustrated by the arrival on the 29th June of an English frigate, the *Medea,* carrying the news of the conclusion of peace in Europe.

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[1] For an account of the sortie: Bussy's letter to de Suffren, June 25 (P.A. ms. 628); *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, pp. 280-81; Wilks—*History of Mysoor*, II, p. 194.

That brought hostilities in India to a sudden and abrupt close. The news of the conclusion of peace in Europe was conveyed in a letter from Hughes to de Suffren, in which the former wrote that reports had reached Madras from Bombay on the 17th June that Preliminaries of Peace had been signed in Paris on the 20th January and ratified by France on the 9th February. The news was confirmed by some private letters from Europe and also newspapers which had reached India by the overland route. The Madras Government had promptly sent a boat to inform Hughes about it, but since he had left Cuddalore by that time, it was not till his return to Madras on the 25th that he came to know about it. Thus he took the earliest opportunity to send the news to de Suffren, together with copies of private letters and newspapers which confirmed it, and he proposed an immediate cessation of hostilities pending the arrival of official orders from Europe. While expressing surprise that no official information had been received yet either from the Government or from the Court of Directors, Hughes stated that there were nevertheless sufficient grounds to believe that the news of the conclusion of peace was correct. Macartney, Governor of Madras, also wrote to the same effect to Bussy and sent two Commissioners, Sadleir and Staunton, by the frigate *Medea* to settle the terms of the armistice.[3]

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[1] Bussy to Castries, September 9 (P.A. ms. 402).

[2] De Suffren to Bussy, June 25 (P.A. ms. 630); Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, p. 202.

[3] Bussy to Castries, Sept. 9 (P.A. ms. 402); *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren*, p. 282. Sadleir was a member of the Madras Council and Staunton was Private Secretary to Macartney.

On the morning of the 30th de Suffren went ashore to inform Bussy of the sudden turn of affairs and to give him the letters of Hughes and Macartney. The two English Commissioners also landed in the afternoon to carry on talks with Bussy for a cessation of hostilities. Although the news of peace came to de Suffren as a complete surprise and upset his plans which he was hoping to execute after the arrival of the expected reinforcements, he strongly urged Bussy to agree to an immediate armistice, particularly in view of the poor state of the naval squadron. Many of the ships were badly leaking and required extensive repairs. The personnel, already deficient by a quarter of the full complement, had been further reduced by the naval action of the 20th, there being more than five hundred persons on board seriously wounded. Under the circumstances, de Suffren declared, he could not hold himself responsible for the result of another naval combat, and so he advised Bussy to accept an armistice without delay. On the side of Bussy also there were equally valid reasons to agree to an immediate cessation of hostilities. As he wrote in his report to the Minister on the 9th September: "The peace, of whatever little advantage it might be for the future of India, nevertheless came at a happy moment to save the honour of the nation. Casualties in action and disease were reducing our land and naval forces to such an extent that our situation would have become extremely critical, the English receiving help from Europe while we could not hope for any."[1]

In spite of these weighty reasons, however, two days intervened before the terms of the armistice could be finally settled. Hostilities on the sea were suspended from the 1st July and on land from the 2nd. The question that presented some difficulty was how to include the French ally Tipu also in the arrangement. As the English Commissioners were not vested with sufficient competence to accept the terms proposed by Bussy, the latter sent on the 3rd two French Commissioners to Madras, de Launay and de Maurville, to settle with Macartney the terms on which Tipu was to be invited to join the general pacification.[1] The course of the negotiations and the terms of the peace settlement will be discussed in the next chapter.

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[1] P.A. ms. 402.

The extreme haste with which the Madras Government came to announce the conclusion of peace in Europe and the eagerness it expressed for an immediate cessation of hostilities were rather significant commentaries on the military situation. The suspicion expressed by some was not perhaps altogether unfounded, that the English knew about the conclusion of peace even before their attack on the 13th, and that they had deliberately kept it secret from the French in the hope of being able to crown their military operations by some striking successes. Whatever truth there might have been in it, Bussy felt convinced, as he wrote in his report to the Minister dated 9th September, that the English move in announcing the conclusion of peace in Europe "was a confession on their part that in the action of the 13th and in the sortie of the 25th as well as in the naval combat they had not achieved any decided advantage in spite of the superiority of their forces; otherwise they would not have hesitated in keeping secret from us the news which they had received."[2]

That the military situation was definitely unfavourable for the English, to whom the news of peace came as a welcome relief, is borne out by the testimony of several English historians. Malleson in his usual impartial way writes, "The suspension of arms was most unfortunate for France. The army of Stuart, before Kadalur, represented the last hope of the English in Southern India. It was reduced then by the want of supplies to the greatest extremities. An attack by the French in force could have scarcely failed to annihilate it. With its destruction Madras and all Southern India would have passed over to the French."[3] Wilks also has expressed the same opinion. "The retreat of the English army, with the loss of its battering train and equipments, is the most favourable result that could possibly have been anticipated from a continuation of hostilities, and a crisis ...... was terminated by the arrival of an English frigate bearing a flag of truce and Commissioners deputed by the Government of Madras to announce to M. Bussy the certain intelligence of the conclusion of peace between their respective nations in Europe; perfectly aware of the condition of the army before Cuddalore, the Commissioners were instructed to declare that they were charged with positive orders to that army to abstain from hostilities, whether M. Bussy should accede to an armistice or decline it."[1]

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[1] P.A. mss. 639, 640; *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, pp. 283-284.

[2] P.A. ms. 402.

[3] Malleson—*Final French Struggles in India*, pp. 74-75.

Before concluding this chapter a brief notice may be taken of the views of Bussy on the plan of the expedition, as expressed in his official report to the Minister dated 9th September. Bussy, as was only natural, deplored the lack of success of the military operations, for which he blamed the unexpected course of events in India before his arrival and the misfortunes experienced in European waters preventing the sending of reinforcements in time. But nevertheless he considered the plan of the expedition "as the best conceived and the most wisely combined" one that he had ever seen issuing out of the office of a Minister during his fifty years of active service. This opinion evidently was meant to please the Minister and did not express the real conviction of Bussy. For in his *mémoire* to the Minister at the time of his appointment in 1781 he had stated that after the severe reductions made in the number of troops and the amount of money he had demanded he could not hold himself responsible for the result of the expedition. Anyway, he concluded his report of the 9th September by stating that he had fulfilled some of the objects of the Government, in protecting the Cape of Good Hope against an English attack and in aiding de Suffren to capture Trinkomali. "I have done all that was humanly possible, with the small means at my disposal, to answer to the views of the Ministry and to the confidence of the King and of yourself".[2]

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[1] Wilks—*History of Mysoor*, II, p. 196.
[2] P.A. ms. 402.

CHAPTER XIV

ANGLO-FRENCH NEGOTIATIONS AND THE LAST DAYS OF BUSSY

I. *The terms of Peace.*

The Preliminaries of Peace between England and France were concluded in January and the definitive treaty in September 1783. But the restitution of territories in India was held up by nearly two years, because of an unusual delay in sending official instructions about the procedure of executing the treaty. In the absence of official instructions the representatives of the two Powers in India put different interpretations on the terms of the treaty relating to the restitution of territories. That was what prolonged negotiations from July 1783 to January 1785, when ultimately the treaty was put into effect, some time after the death of Bussy. The negotiations were, however, happily marked by a spirit of cordiality and compromise on both sides, without any sacrifice of what they considered to be their vital interests. Before turning to the course of these protracted negotiations, it is useful to notice briefly the terms of the peace relating to the restitution of territories in India.

The first news of the terms of the Preliminaries relating to India came in the shape of instructions from the Directors of the English Company to the Governor-General and Council in Calcutta, dated 6th March 1783.[1] Marquis de Castries also informed Bussy of the conclusion of Preliminaries in a letter dated 15th March and sent instructions couched in similar language as that used by the Directors of the English Company.[2] The terms of the peace laid down a simple restitution of territories as they stood in 1776, a return to the *status quo ante bellum*. By the 13th Article, Chandernagore and all the other French factories in Bengal and Orissa were to be restored immediately after the ratification of the definitive treaty. French subjects in Bengal were assured of security and freedom of trade as they had enjoyed before. The English consented to allow Chandernagore to be surrounded by a canal, and on their side the French agreed not to erect any fortifications or maintain a large number of troops at Chandernagore, keeping the place as a purely commercial settlement. Article 14 of the Preliminaries stipulated for the restitution of Pondicherry, Karikal, Mahé and the French factory at Surat immediately on the ratification of the definitive treaty. With Pondicherry were attached two new districts, Vilnoor and Bahour, and with Karikal the four *maganons* or groups of villages which the French possessed before the commencement of hostilities. The English bound themselves to employ their good offices to obtain a formal cession of these territories from, the Nawab of the Carnatic and the Raja of Tanjore. Article 16 of the Preliminaries related to the allies of the two nations in India, who were to be invited to accede to the peace, the accession to be made within four months. If Haidar Ali (whose death was not known in Europe at the time of the conclusion of the Preliminaries) refused to accede to the treaty, war would continue between him and the English, and France must recall the troops lent to him. In case Haidar opposed the withdrawal of French troops, the English would give them all necessary military assistance. It was also expressly stipulated that Pondicherry and Karikal were not to be restored to the French until their troops had been withdrawn from the camp of Haidar Ali. The terms of the Preliminaries were included *in toto* in the definitive peace, concluded on September 2, 1783. The Madras Government received instructions about the execution of the treaty early in March 1784,[1] but the instructions of Castries did not reach Bussy till June.[2]

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[1] P.A. ms. 486.

[2] *Ibid.*, mss. 488, 489. The instructions of Castries reached Bussy in Sept. 1783 (ms. 411).

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[1] P.A. ms. 732—Macartney to Bussy, 9th March 1784. See also C.R.O.—*The French in India* Series, Vol. XIII (Circular letter from the Secret Committee to Bengal, Madras and Bombay, dated 9th Sept. 1783, with a postscript of 19th Sept. to keep watch on the future machinations of the French).

[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 428—Bussy to Castries, 12th June 1784.

II. *Cessation of hostilities between Tipu and the English.*

The cessation of hostilities as between the English and the French presented no difficulty, as both sides welcomed it as a relief and, besides, they were under the obligation to carry out the arrangement arrived at in Europe. But the question that presented a good deal of difficulty was to persuade Tipu to stop hostilities all on a sudden. It required all the diplomatic tact of Bussy to achieve the desired result, to establish a general pacification without making it appear that France had deserted her ally, which would have discredited her for ever in the eyes of all Indian Powers. On the one hand, it was difficult to persuade Tipu to stop hostilities at a time when he was expecting Mangalore to fall. On the other, if Tipu refused to accede to the general pacification under Article 16 of the Preliminaries, the French would have to separate themselves from him, leaving him alone to bear the brunt of an attack not merely by the English but also by the Marathas and Nizam Ali. There was provision for such a combined pressure on Tipu in the recent Anglo-Maratha treaty, and, besides, both the Indian Powers had their own grievances against the ruler of Mysore. Assailed by such a combination, the fall of Tipu seemed inevitable, to be followed by a consolidation of English power in south India and the establishment of closer relationship between the English, the Marathas and Nizam Ali. It would have destroyed forever all French political ambitions in India, and that was why Bussy was extremely anxious to persuade Tipu to join the general pacification.

When the English Commissioners came to Cuddalore on the 30th June to arrange a cessation of hostilities with Bussy, they expressed their willingness to include Tipu also in the general pacification on condition that he released at once all the English prisoners in his hands. Bussy, in his anxiety to smoothen negotiations with Tipu and to draw him into the general pacification, opposed the condition suggested and proposed that Tipu should be simply called upon to stop hostilities under Article 16 of the Preliminaries, leaving the question of the English prisoners to be settled by future negotiations. It was this difference of view which prolonged the talks at Cuddalore and ultimately decided Bussy to send two French agents to settle the matter with Macartney and the Madras Council. Fortunately, his viewpoint was accepted, thus making it easier to arrange a cessation of arms between Tipu and the English.

Bussy took the earliest opportunity to inform Tipu, in a letter dated 2nd July, of the conclusion of peace between England and France and to urge him likewise to make his peace with the English. He stated that he was sending a trusted person, Krishna Rao, to give him all the necessary details as to an ally of France and to make him understand that his interests required the conclusion of peace with the English. "It seems to me that circumstances require that you should also work equally to make peace, and in this matter I promise you all the good offices I can offer."[1] With this letter he sent one from the English Commissioners, in which Tipu was invited to accede to the peace settlement and was informed that orders had been sent to the English officers to stop hostilities against him as soon as he agreed to do so on his side. As a first proof of his desire to conclude peace, he was called upon to liberate all the English prisoners in his hands.[2]

It was only natural that Tipu should have at first appeared unwilling to stop hostilities, and he roundly accused the French of deserting an ally who had begun the war for their sake. But in spite of all his boastings that he would continue the war single-handed, he had the sense to realise that he had little chance of success without the assistance of the French contingent under Cossigny, which had been ordered by Bussy to separate itself from Tipu's forces under the terms of the armistice. Besides, Piveron de Morlat, Cossigny and the chiefs of the European contingents in his service, de Lallée and Bouthenod, used all their persuasions to make him accept the inevitable and conclude peace with the English, as otherwise he ran the risk of being attacked by a combination of the English, the Marathas and Nizam Ali. They also pointed out that far from accusing the French of desertion, he should feel grateful to them for having assured his succession on the sudden death of his father and for having protected his dominions on the Malabar Coast from falling into the hands of the English.

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[1] P. A. ms. 532.

[2] *Ibid.* ms. 533.

He had also reason to feel grateful for the offer of French good offices to secure favourable terms for him from the English. Finally, on the 2nd August an agreement for the cessation of hostilities was arrived at between Tipu and Major Campbell, commanding the English forces on the Malabar Coast, through the mediation of Piveron de Morlat.[1] At the suggestion of Bussy, Tipu sent about the middle of September two Commissioners, Appaji Ram and Srinivasa Rao, to Madras to negotiate a definitive peace with the English.

The question of peace with Tipu was of special importance to both the English and the French, as with it was connected the question of the English prisoners whom de Suffren had handed over to Haidar. It will be recalled that de Suffren had proposed an exchange of prisoners, which was refused by the Governor of Madras. The latter had maintained his attitude even when warned by de Suffren that refusal would mean handing over the prisoners to the custody of Haidar Ali. Then on the 11th May 1783 Macartney wrote to Bussy proposing an exchange of prisoners, including those who had been handed over by de Suffren to the custody of Haidar Ali.[2] Bussy replied on the 24th, agreeing to an exchange of prisoners but adding that since he had no authority over those handed over to Haidar Ali he could only request Tipu to return them.[3] Macartney wrote again on the 18th June that by the laws of warfare the prisoners taken by de Suffren belonged to France and that Tipu had no right to refuse to liberate them. The Governor of Madras expressed his readiness to arrange an immediate exchange of prisoners if Bussy was prepared to include in the cartel those held in the custody of Tipu.[4] Matters rested at this point when at the end of June the Madras Government informed Bussy of the conclusion of peace in Europe.[5]

That sudden development solved the difficulty to a large extent and the cessation of hostilities was followed immediately by an exchange of prisoners between de Suffren and Hughes and between Bussy and Stuart, without waiting for a settlement of the question of the prisoners held in the custody of Tipu. Shortly after, the English prisoners held at Trinkomali and in the Isle of France were returned, as also the French prisoners held in Bengal and at Tanjore and Trichinopoly. There still remained, however, the question of the English prisoners handed over by de Suffren to Haidar Ali. Macartney went on insisting that the French were under an obligation to procure their immediate release after the cessation of hostilities and that they could not put forward a pretext that they had no responsibility after the transfer of the prisoners to Haidar. He gave Bussy to understand that in case Tipu refused to return the prisoners, it was his clear duty to join the English in bringing military pressure on him. Bussy obviously was faced with a rather delicate situation. On the one hand, under the rules of warfare he could not shirk responsibility for the prisoners taken by de Suffren and handed over, for whatever valid reason, to the custody of Haidar. On the other, the French would be thoroughly discredited in the eyes of the Indian Powers if they joined with the English against their recent ally. The only solution to this difficult problem was the conclusion of peace between Tipu and the English, and this was one of the principal reasons for the extreme anxiety of Bussy to see Tipu come to a settlement with the English.

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[1] Wilks—*History of Mysoor,* II, pp. 217-220.

[2] P. A. ms. 685.

[3] *Ibid,* ms. 686.

[4] *Ibid,* ms. 687.

[5] *Ibid,* mss. 689-691.

III. *Bussy moves to Pondicherry.*

Apart from the question of the English prisoners held in the custody of Tipu, the relations between Bussy and Macartney were very cordial and were inspired by a happy spirit of compromise. We have already noticed the despatch of two French Commissioners to Madras to solve the differences between Bussy and the English Commissioners sent to Cuddalore regarding the conditions of the cessation of hostilities.[1] The mission of the French Commissioners was entirely successful, thanks to the compromising spirit of Macartney and the Madras Council.[2] On July 20 Macartney wrote to Bussy that he had received officials news of the ratification of the Preliminaries by England.[1] Bussy wrote in reply on July 27 that after the ratification of the Preliminaries, orders could be expected shortly from both the Governments for the restitution of territories. Pending the arrival of official orders, he asked permission to be allowed to take up his residence at Oulgaret on the outskirts of Pondicherry for recouping his health and to make some repairs to the walls of Pondicherry to ensure the safety of the inhabitants against marauding bandits. In making the request he was careful to state that he had no intention of taking possession of Pondicherry or hoisting the French flag there before the receipt of official orders from the two Governments.[2] The Madras Council appeared quite accommodating, and in a letter dated 3rd August Macartney informed Bussy that his request had been granted.[3] Apart from the certainty that Pondicherry would ultimately be returned to the French, as Cuddalore to the English, what induced the Madras Council to accede to Bussy's request was his assurance that the French flag would not be hoisted at Pondicherry until the receipt of official orders from the two Governments.

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[1] P. A. mss. 692, 693.

[2] *Ibid.*, mss. 695-696.

Shortly after, Bussy moved to Oulgaret, but when he sought permission for the French to assume the duty of maintaining law and order at Pondicherry, Macartney objected and replied that it could not be done before the official restitution.[4] In a letter dated 18th September Bussy sought permission to transfer French troops and munitions from Cuddalore to Pondicherry, which was granted on the assurance that the French flag would not be hoisted at Pondicherry nor would the French assume any formal authority in the town before the official restitution.[5] Thus far Anglo-French relations were marked by a spirit of compromise and mutual understanding, but the cordiality disappeared over two issues, negotiations between the English and Tipu and restitution of Trinkômali. Before we proceed to discuss the difficulties connected with those two issues, let us turn our attention for a while to the departure of de Suffren from the scene of operations which had immortalised him in the history of naval warfare.

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[1] P. A. ms. 697.

[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 698.

[3] *Ibid.*, ms. 699.

[4] *Ibid.*, ms. 701 (Bussy to Macartney, 24th August) and ms. 703 (Macartney to Bussy, 8th September).

[5] *Ibid.*, mss. 705, 709.

IV. *Return of de Suffren to France.*

For more than two months and a half after the cessation of hostilities early in July, de Suffren remained in uncertainty about the future movement of his squadron. He, however, expected that the squadron would be recalled to France, and in August he took some of the ships to Trinkomali for necessary repairs.[1] About the middle of September he went to Pondicherry, where Bussy had already moved, and there he was relieved of his anxiety by the arrival of Ministerial instructions relating to the execution of the Preliminaries.[2] In a letter dated 16th March 1783 Marquis de Castries informed de Suffren that since the English had decided to keep only five ships in Indian waters, he was to keep an equal number there under the command of Peinier and send the rest back to France. He himself was permitted to return with his squadron. He was further informed that in recognition of his services he had been promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-General.[3] It was highly flattering to de Suffren, and in a letter to his friend Madame de Seillans, dated 2nd October 1783, he wrote: "I am overwhelmed by the kindness of the Minister and that before the capture of Trinkomali, which was not known till some time after (the Minister's letter of the 16th March)."[4]

In accordance with the instructions of the Minister de Suffren finally left Trinkomali on the 6th October with his squadron, keeping only five ships in Indian waters under the command of Peinier.[5] De Suffren reached the Isle of France on the 12th November and was given a magnificent reception which he fully deserved.[6] On the 29th he left for the Cape of

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[1] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, p. 291.

[2] *Ibid*, pp. 300-301.

[3] P. A. ms. 490.

[4] Ortolan—*Moniteur Universel* (5th November 1859).

[5] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, pp. 306-307 (also Suffren to Bussy, 5th October, 1783—P. A. ms. 684).

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 317.

Good Hope.[1] There also he received an equally flattering reception, and in a letter to his friend Madame de Seillans he wrote on the 28th, "The Dutch have received me here as their liberator. . . . . But among the compliments which have flattered me most, there is nothing which has given me more pleasure than the esteem and consideration shown to me by the English who are here.[2] If M. d'Orves had not been dead he would have died of jealousy."[3] After a short stay de Suffren left the Cape of Good Hope on the 3rd January 1784 and reached Toulon on the 26th March.[4]

De Suffren has occupied such a prominent place in our narrative that, although it is not strictly relevant for our purpose, it is worthwhile to give a brief account of his last days in France before taking up the course of our story. Back in France, de Suffren enjoyed a brief period of honour and glory which few of his countrymen had ever achieved, and then passed into oblivion, ending his career in circumstances the mystery of which has not yet been indisputably unravelled. From Toulon de Suffren hastened to Versailles where he was acclaimed as a national hero by one and all, including the King, the Queen and the members of the Royal family. It would be out of place here to narrate some of the interesting anecdotes in this connection given by Roux.[5] Suffice it to note that de Suffren was accorded a fitting recognition for his services by the creation of a fourth post of Vice-Admiral for him alone on the 18th April, 1784. It was in his home province, Provence, that he received the greatest ovation. The *Estates* of Provence struck a medal in his honour with the inscription: "The Cape protected; Trinkomali captured; Cuddalore delivered; India defended; six glorious combats." The States-General of Holland also sent him a gold medal struck in his honour and a letter of compliments to mark their sense of gratitude for the services he had rendered.

An enterprising man like de Suffren could not long remain idle, and as war clouds again hovered over Europe during 1786-87 he was anxious to see active service once more. He was greatly disappointed when the prospect of war was removed by what he considered to be a weak-kneed policy on the part of France, which he criticised bitterly in some of his letters to Madame de Seillans. He was even more disappointed when he did not get the rank of a Marshal for which he applied in 1787. He did not long survive the double disappointment. spending the last days in comparative oblivion. The end came on the 8th December 1788, rather unexpectedly and in circumstances which have not been clearly explained by his biographers. One thing however is certain. He did not die a natural death as the tradition of his house asserts, supported by some of his biographers. The evidence of Jal, the historiographer of the Navy is more credible that de Suffren was killed in a duel, but the cause of the duel is disputed by other biographers. Thus ended the career of one of the greatest naval commanders ever produced by France. It is tempting to speculate as to what would have happened if he had lived during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic days. He would have been at least a worthier antagonist of Nelson than Villeneuve.

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[1] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren,* p. 326.

[2] It refers to the English squadron under Commodore King (Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren,* p. 206).

[3] Ortolan—*Moniteur Universel* (5th November 1859).

[4] *Journal de Bord du Bailli de Suffren,* pp. 329 and 349.

[5] Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde,* pp. 210-211.

V. *French good offices and Anglo-Mysore negotiations.*

We have already seen Bussy's anxiety to persuade Tipu to stop hostilities, prompted by the fear that in case of a prolongation of the war Tipu might be exposed to a combined attack by the English, the Marathas and Nizam Ali, and also that the French would be totally discredited in the eyes of the Indian Powers for having deserted an ally all on a sudden. It was mainly due to Bussy's efforts and the realisation of his own weak position, deprived of French help, that Tipu concluded an armistice early in August and decided to send two envoys to Madras to carry on negotiations for a definitive peace. In order to preserve the alliance and the credit of France in the eyes of the Indian Powers, Bussy was naturally desirous of taking part in the negotiations to secure the most favourable terms possible for Tipu. The latter also agreed, while intimating to Bussy the terms he wanted, to depend on his sagacity and wisdom to secure a favourable treaty; and it was decided that the Mysore envoys to Madras would be accompanied by an accredited French representative. The English, on the other hand, were extremely unwilling to allow French participation in the negotiations, hoping to be able to impose a severe treaty on Tipu, isolated from the French, or in case of a prolongation of hostilities to crush him in concert with the Marathas and Nizam Ali. It was this difference which somewhat embittered the otherwise cordial relations between the English and the French. A further complication was introduced by the attitude of the Mysore envoys, who, either on their own initiative or under secret instructions from Tipu as Bussy suspected, appeared unwilling to hold any communion with the French representative during the course of the negotiations. The situation was extremely delicate and required the utmost diplomatic tact and prudence on the part of Bussy.

Let us now trace the course of events down to the conclusion of a definitive peace between Tipu and the English. In reply to Bussy's letter intimating that Tipu had agreed to adhere to the Preliminaries under Article 16 and had decided to send two envoys to Madras for negotiations, Macartney wrote to Bussy on August 24 that he would be glad to receive the Mysore envoys and then added, "Since happily there do not remain any other differences today than those between the Company and Tipu Sultan, only the agent of the Company and Tipu's envoys will be sufficient to discuss and conclude these issues".[1] In a despatch to Castries, dated 9th September, Bussy gave the reason for insisting on offering his good offices during negotiations between Tipu and the English, despite the character of the former and the unwillingness of the latter to see the French intervene. Bussy was doubtful if Tipu, left alone, would be able to secure favourable terms from the English The ruler of Mysore was no doubt "a man of bad faith, perfidious like all Indians" and had inflicted great hardships on the French troops placed at his disposal, but, Bussy added, "despite all that, it is necessary for the French nation not to produce the impression of abandoning him under the present circumstances; we may perhaps be in need of keeping him in hand

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[1] P. A. ms. 700.

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for the future."[1] On the 18th September Bussy replied to Macartney's letter that since Tipu was considered an ally of the French within the scope of Article 16 of the Preliminaries, the latter were entitled to offer their good offices during negotiations between him and the English.[2]

In offering his good offices Bussy experienced difficulty not only from the English but also from Tipu and his agent on the Coromandel Coast, Sayyid Sahib, who despatched the Mysore envoys to Madras without previous intimation to the French. Bussy was naturally offended and wrote sharp letters to both Tipu and Sayyid Sahib on the 18th September. In his letter to the former he recalled how France had organised a military expedition to India at the request of Haidar Ali. The conclusion of peace in Europe had ended French military operations, and in response to Bussy's appeal Tipu had agreed to a cessation of arms and to begin negotiations with the English for a definitive peace. But the attitude of Sayyid Sahib was rather strange and open to suspicion. He deliberately delayed the departure of Tipu's envoys to Madras, and finally sent them off without the knowledge of Bussy, in violation of the previous arrangement by which they were to have been accompanied by a French agent. Bussy further added that he had written to Nizam Ali and the Marathas in the interest of Tipu. He requested Tipu to ask his agents to conduct themselves in a manner different from what they did, otherwise he would form the impression that they received secret instructions contrary to the spirit of the letters which Tipu had written to him.[3] In his letter to Sayyid Sahib Bussy complained against the sudden departure of Tipu's agents for Madras, contrary to the previous arrangement that they were to be accompanied by a French agent and his interpreter.[4]

Not to be baffled either by the dislike of the English or the un-cooperative attitude of Sayyid Sahib, Bussy decided to send a French agent to Madras separately to take part in the

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[1] P. A. ms. 403.
[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 706.
[3] *Ibid.*, ms. 540.
[4] *Ibid.*, ms. 541.

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negotiations between the English and Tipu. In a letter to Macartney, dated 24th September, he informed the Madras Governor that he was sending an experienced man named Martin to watch the course of the negotiations and to help the conclusion of a treaty fair and equitable to both sides. He further added that he was entitled to offer his good offices under Article 16 of the Preliminaries.[1] Martin and his interpreter, Krishna Rao, accordingly left for Madras. Macartney, unwilling to have French interference in the negotiations but unable to prevent it directly, wrote to Bussy on the 25th October that Martin's mission would have been more useful at the *Darbar* of Tipu than at Madras, and that the good offices of the French were more urgently required for the release of the English prisoners in Tipu's hands than for the negotiations for a peace treaty.[2]

Martin's mission, however, proved entirely fruitless. During his stay at Madras for nearly a month he remained only a passive spectator and did not get an opportunity even to meet Tipu's agents. They were effectively guarded by the English, and besides they themselves appeared quite unwilling to establish any contact with Martin. On the latter's complaint Bussy wrote to Macartney on the 30th October, protesting against the attitude of the English in preventing any contact between Martin and Tipu's agents.[3] Macartney replied that the English were in no way responsible for it. "The instructions of the Nawab have undoubtedly guided the conduct of his *Wakils*."[4] Whatever it might have been, it was clearly useless for Martin to remain at Madras, and he returned to Pondicherry early in November.

At the same time the scene of negotiations was also shifted from Madras to Mangalore. After some preliminary talks between the English representatives and Tipu's agents, the latter were recalled and the Madras Government decided to send Sadleir and Staunton to Tipu's camp to finalise negotiations.[5] In a letter to Castries, dated 20th November, Bussy gave an account of the course of negotiations between Tipu and the English. The latter, "seduced by the hope held out to him for a long time by the English to conclude a special treaty of alliance with him which would protect him from the Marathas under all circumstances", showed himself determined to avoid French mediation. It was through this motive that Tipu had compelled de Cossigny to leave his camp with the French contingent, by ill-treating him and refusing to supply money and provisions for his troops. That also explained why his agents avoided all contact with Martin at Madras, and why suddenly the scene of negotiations was shifted to Mangalore. Bussy however expressed satisfaction at the prospect of the conclusion of peace between Tipu and the English, although without the mediation of the French.[1]

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[1] P. A. ms. 708.
[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 712.
[3] *Ibid.*, ms. 713.
[4] *Ibid.*, ms. 719.
[5] *Ibid.*, ms. 718 (Macartney to Bussy, 2nd November 1783).

It is necessary here to turn for a while to notice the open rift between Tipu and Cossigny and the sudden departure of the latter from Mangalore with the French contingent. It will be recalled that when Tipu left for the Malabar Coast in March 1783, he was given a French contingent of about 600 men under the command of Cossigny. This contingent, together with those under de Lallée and Bouthenod directly in Tipu's service, had been largely responsible for Tipu's successes against the English. At the time of the cessation of hostilities between the English and the French, Bussy sent orders to Cossigny to separate his contingent from the rest of Tipu's forces, but at the same time not to such a distance as would produce the impression that the French had suddenly deserted their ally. It was from this time that Tipu's attitude towards Cossigny, which was never cordial, became definitely cold. The climax came towards the end of September (1783), when Cossigny suddenly left Tipu's camp and took the route to Tellicherry without even having given any previous intimation to Bussy.

The circumstances which led to this sudden move are not quite clear. Tipu was the first to write to Bussy complaining against the conduct of Cossigny, whom he accused of deliberate dishonesty and malversation. Cossigny on his side wrote to Bussy on the 10th October from Tellicherry, and also sent an agent named Berneron to explain the whole circumstances. Cossigny's version was that when Tipu found that no further help was to be expected from the French contingent, he began to inflict intolerable hardships and indignities on it in order to force it to leave the camp and thus relieve him of the burden of maintaining it. While not justifying Cossigny's conduct in suddenly leaving Tipu's camp, Bussy did not believe Tipu's accusation either.[1] Anyway, the rift was complete and there was no means of undoing it. Even de Lallée and Bouthenod, who were directly in the service of Tipu, also wrote to Bussy for absorption in the French army, but Bussy could not do anything for them because of financial difficulties.

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[1] P. A. ms. 413.

This incident made it even more embarrassing for Bussy to offer his good offices for negotiations between Tipu and the English. But he did all he could to give saner advice to Tipu, not so much for the sake of the latter's friendship as to maintain the credit of France in the eyes of the Indian Powers, by giving the impression of not having deserted an ally. The English Commissioners left for Mangalore about the middle of November, but although Tipu was impressed about the necessity of concluding peace, he kept the negotiations protracted for a few months more in order to squeeze as much as possible from his conquests in the Carnatic, which had to be returned after the peace treaty.[2] Finally, on March 11, 1784 a definitive peace treaty was concluded between Tipu and the English, which led to a restitution of territories and the release of the English prisoners handed over by de Suffren to Haidar. Thus one cause of anxiety for Bussy was removed.[3]

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[1] Bussy's letter to Castries, 20th November 1783—(P. A. ms. 413); also Martineau—*Bussy et l'Inde Française*, pp. 385-386.

[2] Bussy to Castries, 6th January 1784 (P. A. ms. 417).

[3] For peace negotiations between Tipu and the English first at Madras and then at Mangalore see Wilks—*History of Myoor*, Vol. II. pp. 255-267. The treaty was signed on the 11th March. The Madras Government reported it to the Supreme Government in Calcutta on the 27th March, enclosing a copy of the treaty—Secret Select Committee Proceedings, Fort William, 13th April 1784 (Forrest—*Letters, Despatches etc., Foreign Department, Government of India*, Vol. III, p. 1069). In order to realise the danger in which Tipu stood after the cessation of Anglo-French hostilities, it is interesting to notice that the Governor-General and Council in Calcutta strongly condemned the haste with which the

VI. *Anglo-French negotiations for the execution of the Peace Treaty: the question of Trinkomali.*

Anglo-French negotiations for the execution of the peace treaty dragged on for nearly eighteen months, first because of a long delay in receiving news of the conclusion of the definitive treaty, and second because of a sharp difference of opinion over the question of the restitution of Trinkomali. As we have noticed already, relations between the French and the English were friendly and cordial down to the beginning of September 1783. In anticipation of the restitution of Pondicherry the French were allowed to move troops and munitions there and even to import provisions duty-free. Bussy, faced with acute financial difficulties, was anxious to get back possession of the French territories at the earliest possible opportunity after the conclusion of the definitive treaty. In order to have the preliminary discussions completed beforehand, he wrote to the Madras Council on the 18th September, proposing the despatch of an English agent to Pondicherry to consider the problems relating to the restitution of territories pending the conclusion of the final treaty.[1] The Madras Council accepted the proposal and early in November sent George Isac Hoissard to Pondicherry.[2] On his side, Bussy appointed Moneron to carry on preliminary talks for the restitution of territories.[3]

Madras Government had invited Tipu through the medium of Bussy to conclude peace. The move was characterised as "at once impolitic and disgraceful." The Madras Government was given power merely to arrange a cessation of hostilities but not to conclude a definitive peace with Tipu. The restriction was, however, ignored and a treaty was concluded on the 11th March, as noticed above. The Governor-General condemned the treaty for not including any reference to the Nawab of the Carnatic or to the Marathas, with whom the English had concluded in 1782 a treaty of alliance directed against the ruler of Mysore. The opposition of the Governor-General and Council to the treaty with Tipu was overborne by orders from England.—Secret Select Committee Proceedings, Fort Willliam, 4th September 1783, 13th May and 13th July 1784 (Forrest, Vol. III).

[1] P. A. ms. 706.

[2] *Ibid*, mss. 710, 715, 716.

[3] *Ibid*, ms. 717.

On the 29th December the Governor of Madras sent instructions to Hoissard about the arrangements to be made for the execution of the treaty when concluded, and informed Bussy that he was expecting shortly official confirmation of the signature of the definitive treaty.[1] On the 21st February (1784) Macartney informed Bussy about the arrival of the *Swallow*, carrying official news of the signature of the definitive treaty, and he also sent him a copy of the treaty early in March.[2] On his side Bussy had received no information from France, and in the absence of official instructions it was difficult for him to proceed to the immediate execution of the treaty as the English wanted. He was, however, faced with an acute financial situation, and was thus anxious to get back possession of the old French territories in India at the earliest moment. So he wrote to Macartney on the 16th March that although he had received no instructions from his Government, he was ready to proceed to the restitution of territories if the Madras Council thought it necessary.[3] Following this, towards the end of March the Madras Government sent three Commissioners to Pondicherry, Floyer, Darlymple and Fallofield, to negotiate with their French opposite numbers, Monneron, Coutenceau and Moracin, about the execution of the treaty.[4]

The negotiations, however, dragged on for several months, being punctuated by proposals, counter-proposals and temporary suspensions of talks. Both sides were willing to proceed to the immediate restitution of territories, but one insuperable difficulty stood in the way, namely the question of Trinkomali. This place had originally belonged to the Dutch, from whom it was captured by the English, who in turn gave place to the French. The arrangement made by Bussy for the occupation of Trinkomali divided responsibility between the French and the Dutch, the former controlling the port and the two forts and the latter being in charge of civil administration. Evidently sovereignty remained with France. Bussy had refused to transfer the place completely to the Dutch, as the latter had wanted, and his intention was to try to keep Trinkomali to France at the end of the war.

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[1] P. A. ms. 723.

[2] *Ibid*, mss. 729, 732.

[3] *Ibid*, ms. 733.

[4] *Ibid*, mss. 734-739.

The strategic importance of Trinkomali was fully realised by both the French and the English. At the outset of the talks the English proposed that the restitution of Trinkomali be taken up along with that of Pondicherry and other possessions, as stipulated in the treaty. Now, the Anglo-French peace treaty did not contain any specific provision regarding Trinkomali. The preliminary treaty was signed before the news of the capture of Trinkomali by de Suffren had reached Europe. Even the definitive treaty, concluded on the 3rd September, did not contain any specific reference to Trinkomali. But Article 19 related to the restitution of territories captured by either side during the war and not specially mentioned in the treaty. This clause evidently covered Trinkomali, and the execution of the treaty demanded that the French should hand over the place to the English. By the Anglo-Dutch preliminary peace treaty Trinkomali was to be handed over by the English to the Dutch. There was thus no doubt about the ultimate settlement: the French were to return Trinkomali to the English, who in turn were to give it back to the Dutch.

But the difficulty arose as to the time and procedure of restitution. The English were anxious to get back immediate possession of Trinkomali from the French, and they claimed not to re-transfer the place to the Dutch before the conclusion of a definitive treaty between England and Holland. They even refused to allow the Dutch to have any part in the discussions at Pondicherry regarding the restitution of territories. On the other hand, Bussy suspected, and with reason, that once in possession of Trinkomali the English would not give it back to the Dutch. So he wanted to postpone the question of Trinkomali till the conclusion of a definitive treaty between England and Holland, when the double transfer of the place from the French to the English and from the English to the Dutch, would take place simultaneously. In the meantime he proposed to proceed to the restitution of other territories in India between the English and the French.

The question of Trinkomali broke up the negotiations at Pondicherry shortly after they were started, the English demanding an immediate restitution of the place and the French contending that they could not do it without specific orders from Paris.[1] On the 3rd May the English Commissioners wrote to the French delegates that they had received instructions from Madras to break off negotiations and return.[2] Only Darlyinple remained, and in order to put pressure on the French to conclude negotiations at once Macartney threatened to hoist the English flag at Pondicherry. Bussy found himself in great embarrassment. On the one hand he could not yield to the English demand about Trinkomali without official instructions from France, and on the other he was faced with acute financial difficulties which could be solved only by the restitution of territories. He wrote two frantic letters to Castries, dated 1st and 5th May, giving an account of his financial difficulties and of the negotiations with the English, and hoping to be rescued from the embarrassing situation by the receipt of official instructions regarding the restitution of Trinkomali.[3] Although talks were suspended at Pondicherry at the beginning of May and the English delegates returned to Madras, all through the month correspondence went on between Bussy and Macartney to find out an avenue for the resumption of negotiations. Finally, Bussy agreed to hand over the port and the two forts at Trinkomali to the English if he did not receive contrary instructions from France by the beginning of July, and it was on this basis that Macartney agreed to resume negotiations and to send the English delegates again to Pondicherry.[4]

Negotiations were resumed early in June,[5] but they were broken off again within a few days, after the arrival of a French frigate, the *Précieuse,* carrying the long-awaited instructions from Castries about the execution of the treaty.[6] According to these instructions the French were to hand over Trinkomali to the English, to be re-transferred to the Dutch immediately after. Bussy at once communicated the instructions to the English delegates and also to Falk, the Dutch Governor of

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[1] P. A. mss. 763, 764 (Letters from the English to the French Commissioners dated 23rd and 27th April 1784).

[2] *Ibid,* ms. 765.

[3] *Ibid,* mss. 426, 427.

[4] *Ibid,* mss.-742-745.

[5] *Ibid,* ms. 771.

[6] *Ibid,* ms. 428.

Ceylon. But the English delegates refused to accept the proposal of a simultaneous transfer of Trinkomali in the absence of fresh instructions from London.[1] Negotiations were consequently broken off on the 1st July. Bussy wrote to Macartney on the 4th that although he had agreed to the immediate restitution of Trinkomali as the basis of the resumption of negotiations in June, his hands were now tied by official instructions from Paris. If the English were unwilling to continue the talks on any other basis, he had to accept a second suspension of negotiations. He was however sending a frigate to France, and he invited Macartney to take the oportunity of sending an agent to Europe for further clarification of the disputed point.[2] Macartney replied on the 9th July, agreeing to suspend negotiations and to send an agent, Staunton, to Europe by the French frigate.[3]

Thus for the second time negotiations were suspended and the restitution of territories was delayed till the end of January 1785, when official instructions were received in India about the signature of a definitive treaty between England and Holland, which stipulated for a double transfer of Trinkomali simultaneously. Bussy, however, did not live to see the final settlement. He died on the 7th January 1785, and the task of taking back possession of the French settlements in India fell upon his successor, Coutenceau. He had, however, by clever and patient diplomacy succeeded in foiling the English plan regarding Trinkomali. In spite of the acute financial difficulties facing him, he refused to be jostled into a surrender of Trinkomali. As he wrote to Castries, Ségur and Vergennes in August 1784, he felt convinced that once in possession of Trinkomali, the English had no intention of giving it back to the Dutch.[4] The eagerness which the English showed to hurry through negotiations, their insistence on treating the restitution of Trinkomali as the first and the most essential item in the execution of the treaty, and the large number of troops and huge quantities of munitions which they planned to send to

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[1] P. A. ms. 778.
[2] *Ibid*, ms. 746.
[3] *Ibid*, ms. 747.
[4] *Ibid*, mss. 430, 436, 437, 440.

Trinkomali at the time of taking possession confirmed his suspicions. He was all the more convinced that the English would try to keep Trinkomali to themselves by the under-hand support which they gave to the king of Kandy in organising a revolt against Dutch rule. It redounded to the credit of Bussy's diplomatic ability that he saw through the English plan and succeeded in foiling it.

VII. *Bussy's views on future French policy in India.*

Before we close the chapter and turn to the history of the French settlements in India from 1783 to 1793, it remains for us to discuss the political views of Bussy regarding relations with Indian Powers and the future of French possessions in India. These views were clearly expressed in some of the letters exchanged between him and the Minister, Marquis de Castries, during 1783-84.

Bussy felt greatly disappointed at the sudden conclusion of peace, the news of which reached India only three months after his arrival. In fact, peace had been concluded in Europe without any reference to the military situation in India and without any consideration of the effect it might produce on the Indian Powers. For years French agents had carried on propaganda at the various *Darbars* about the intention of France to form a ring of alliances in India and to send a formidable expeditionary force to destroy the English power. Many of the Indian Princes had entered into negotiations, formal and informal, for French military assistance against the English, and they had been persuaded by the exaggerated statements of the French agents to pitch their expectations at too high a point about the strength of the expeditionary force sent under Bussy, expectations which were confirmed by the naval actions of de Suffren. They had no idea about the military situation in Europe and America, and the sudden cessation of hostilities between the French and the English, almost immediately after the landing of Bussy's expeditionary force, came to them as an unexpectedly disappointing setback. It only created in their minds an impression that little reliance could be placed in France as an ally. Moreover, the terms of the peace, by which France did not get any advantage at all, made them convinced about her military weakness. Even after Wandiwash France had not lost credit in the eyes of the Indian Princes, many of whom eagerly sought her alliance after 1763. But the peace of 1783 thoroughly discredited her and made the Indian Powers distrustful both of her military strength and of her consistency as an ally.

After the sudden conclusion of peace, Castries felt it necessary to offer some explanations to the Indian Powers about the abrupt change in French policy. In a letter dated 24th April 1783 he asked Bussy to inform the Indian Princes that it was their vacillating policy and delay in joining the French in an all-out effort against the English that was responsible for the unexpected end of the French expedition. The peace was however not a permanent settlement but a mere temporary truce, and as an effective preparation for the next outbreak of hostilities Castries advised Bussy to persuade the Marathas, Nizam Ali and Haidar Ali (his death was not yet known in Europe) to form an alliance with France.[1]

On the 9th September 1783 Bussy addressed a long *mémoire* to the Minister dealing with political relations with the Indian Powers,[2] as a supplement to the report on military operations bearing the same date.[3] He frankly observed that the sudden conclusion of peace had thoroughly compromised French honour and reputation in the eyes of the Indian Powers. It came just at the moment when many of the Princes had sent *Wakils* for negotiations, and they were totally disconcerted at the unexpected development even before the arrival of the *Wakils* at Cuddalore. Bussy was convinced that after the conclusion of peace, on terms which did not secure any advantage to France whatsoever, it was extremely difficult to vindicate French prestige in future before Indian Powers, specially when they had been fed for the last fifteen years with all sorts of assurances and promises by unscrupulous French agents at their *Darbars*. Personally Bussy thought that the plan of the expedition was sound and would have achieved success but for some unforeseen factors, but it was difficult to persuade the

[1] P. A ms. 515.

[2] *Ibid*, ms. 403.

[3] *Ibid*, ms. 402.

Indian Powers to take the same view. On the other hand, actual developments tended to show them the military superiority of the English, whose armed strength in India at the end of the war was much greater than at the beginning.

Castries, as we have seen, regarded the peace as a mere truce and wanted Bussy to make diplomatic preparations for the next outbreak of hostilities. About the policy to be pursued with respect to the Indian Powers, although he preferred a general coalition, he was sceptical of the value of seeking the alliance of the ruler of Mysore, and urged Bussy to concentrate on cementing relations with the Marathas, who constituted the only Power in India capable of rendering effective help to the French. In a letter dated 1st November 1783 he wrote, "The accounts which have been sent do not permit us to think that the son of Haidar Ali has retained the power of his father or has inherited his hatred against the English . . . . . The Marathas have a consistency stronger and more suitable to operate a revolution in India. It is in this light that you should make all preparations for the next war and you should consider all other objects as subsidiary to it".[1] The adverse attitude of Castries towards the ruler of Mysore is also clear from his letters of the 16th and 17th March 1783, in which he asked Bussy to leave the English and their allies free to take measures for the recovery of the territories conquered from them by Haidar Ali. He also informed Bussy about the conclusion of a special convention by which the English Company guaranteed military assistance to the French in case Haidar Ali opposed the return of the French troops placed at his disposal.[2]

Bussy criticised this policy, and in his reply, dated 28th September 1783, wrote that such a desertion of an ex-ally would thoroughly discredit the French in the eyes of the Indian Powers and would ruin all chances of forming an anti-English coalition in future.[3] It was in order to avoid that odium that, in spite of all the rebuffs he had received from Tipu Sultan and his agents, he still went on pressing his good offices for an equitable peace treaty between Tipu and the English.

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[1] P. A. ms. 550.

[2] *Ibid,* mss. 489, 491.

[3] *Ibid,* ms. 411.

Bussy tried his best to dispel the wrong impressions in France about the policies of the Indian Princes created by the false and exaggerated statements of unscrupulous French agents at the different *Darbars.* He wrote two long letters to Castries for the purpose, one dated 13th February[1] and the other 3rd March 1784.[2] To the latter were attached two *mémoires,* the first dealing with the state of the Mughal Empire and containing a detailed account of the military strength of the various Princes and chiefs in north India, and the second dealing with the history of the Maratha Confederacy and its policy towards France. These are highly interesting documents and reveal a thorough grasp of the complications of the Indian political situation on the part of their author.

In the letter dated 13th February Bussy stated that the main difficulty about the formation of an anti-English coalition in India was the acute jealousy of the Marathas against Haidar Ali. In fact, but for Haidar's money the Marathas would have ended their conflict with the English much earlier and formed an offensive alliance with them against the ambitious ruler of Mysore. They ultimately did conclude a treaty with the English, which clearly indicated aggressive designs against Haidar. After the cessation of hostilities between the English and the French the Marathas wanted to attack Tipu, but considering him as an ally of the French they sent a *Wakil* to Bussy to explain to him their motives and to justify their conduct. He had succeeded for the time being in persuading the Marathas not to move against Tipu. He had done so, because although Tipu was faithless and unreliable, it was to the interest of the French to preserve concord and to bring together the Marathas, Nizam Ali and Tipu into an offensive alliance against the English, to come into operation on the outbreak of the next war between France and England. He had written to all the Powers on the subject, but although peace was preserved among them for the time being, he felt sceptical about the future.

Bussy expressed himself very strongly about the method of maintaining diplomatic relations with the Indian Powers.

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[1] P. A. ms. 420.

[2] *Ibid,* ms. 423.

He wanted to suppress outright the existing system of keeping a large number of official and non-official agents at the different *Darbars,* with no centralisation of control, the activities of these agents remaining in most cases completely unknown to the Governor of Pondicherry. In place of Frenchmen he wanted to employ Indian *Wakils,* more conversant with the languages, manners and customs of the *Darbars* and better able to enter into their secrets. At the same time there was to be an absolute centralisation of control in the hands of the Governor of Pondicherry, who was to act as the only means of communication between France and the Indian Princes. This change of system Bussy advocated on grounds of both efficiency and economy.

Bussy criticised the French agents at the various *Darbars* in the most scathing terms possible, characterising them as a pack of unscrupulous self-seekers who circulated all sorts of false stories in France about the Indian political situation just to win the ear and the favour of the Minister. As he wrote in his report to the Minister dated 9th September 1783, these agents "had sent to Europe only absurd fables . . . . . born of their personal interest or their imagination".[1] The only exception he made was in the case of Montigny, but even in the case of Montigny, while giving him full credit for zeal and honesty, Bussy considered him as totally unfit for the sort of work entrusted to him. In fact, far from being able to know the secrets of the Poona *Darbar,* he had been successfully duped by the Marathas. While he had believed in their assurances of friendship for France and was putting forward to Bussy their proposals for an alliance, he was totally unaware of the fact that they had already concluded a treaty with the English, envisaging an offensive alliance against Haidar Ali, the French ally. It was Malarois, whom Bussy had sent to Poona to contact Montigny, who told him for the first time about the existence of the Anglo-Maratha treaty.

As regards other Frenchmen, Bussy wrote, they were "just Saint-Lubins, not equally criminal to be true, yet as much to be condemned . . . . . for having deceived the ministers and the nation in all their reports. It is surprising that there was not a single one among them who was sufficiently honest, sufficiently truthful and sufficiently wise to have ended their *mémoires* or the reports they sent with this single expression: such is the state of things at the moment I am writing, but within fifteen days and very frequently before this *mémoire* would reach the Ministry nothing of what I am writing will exist or can serve as a basis for any sort of operation, because in Asia nothing is stable and a fresh development may arise every day". It will be remembered that Bussy used nearly the same words in his *mémoire* of 1777, referring to the reports of the French agents at the various Indian *Darbars.* Much of Bussy's criticism was undoubtedly justified, but one cannot help observing that while condemning the reports of unscrupulous agents Bussy went to the other extreme of undue caution. In fact. Bussy had all along been sceptical about the practicability and value of forming alliances in India.

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[1] P. A. ms. 403.

It was not merely for efficiency but also for economy that Bussy wanted to recall the large number of Frenchmen who acted as agents at the various *Darbars.* In contrast to the uselessness of the work they did, they spent money freely and made demands on Bussy which put him to considerable embarrassment. Writing to Castries on the 13th February 1784, he stated that Piveron de Morlat, the agent at the Court of Haidar and Tipu, "made enormous expenses which only one of our great embassies in Europe alone would have justified". In contrast to this huge expenditure "his letters never contained anything but vague and chimerical projects". Piveron de Morlat, "without knowing the state of our finances draws letters of exchange on me and compromises with the greatest light-heartedness the subsistence of the troops and the credit of the Nation". Montigny also made "expenses as considerable as useless . . . . . he has been and will always be duped". He "sends on his own authority and at great expense one French officer to the Court of Delhi and another to the Subadar of the Deccan, and gives promises and assurances with an incredible light-heartedness which would have merely caused laughter if they had not also entailed dangerous consequences".[1] Even Rousseau, the French Consul at Basra, wrote to the different

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[1] P. A. ms. 420.

Powers of Asia that he enjoyed the confidence of the Minister, gave all sorts of promises and assurances and sent adventurous agents to Indian *Darbars.* Beaubrun, the French agent at Goa, had incurred a huge debt to finance this so-called diplomatic work. Bussy thus considered it absolutely necessary to recall the French agents from the various *Darbars* to avoid further wastage of money.

In place of the existing system Bussy wanted to concentrate all diplomatic work in India in the hands of the Governor of Pondicherry, who was to serve as the only channel of communication between the French Government and the Indian Princes. To maintain contact with the different *Darbars,* the Governor of Pondicherry was to employ Brahmin *Wakils* according to the system of the country. These *Wakils* possessed diplomatic adroitness and *finesse* to an exceptional degree, and knowing the languages and usages of the country they were better fitted than any foreigner to get into the secrets of any *Darbar.* For normal diplomatic relations the English also employed Indian *Wakils.* It was true that these *Wakils* might be duped or that they might dupe the French Government, but even then Bussy considered the risks far less than if Frenchmen were employed as diplomatic agents. Moreover, the employment of Indian *Wakils* would certainly be preferable from the point of view of economy.

Bussy objected with equal vehemence to keeping French troops in the service of the Indian Princes. After 1763 a large number of French troops got scattered all over India in search of career and fortune. They accepted service under various Princes, forming small European contingents. It had been thought by the French Government that these contingents would prove very useful to France in moulding the policies of the Indian Princes in case of a war between France and England, and the Pondicherry Government had given direct assistance and encouragement to the maintenance of these contingents. But Bussy was of the opinion that far from serving any useful national purpose, they were only discrediting France in the eyes of the Indian Powers. The French troops in the service of the Indian Princes were merely self-seekers and undisciplined bandits and had justly earned the contempt of their employers. As an illustration, Bussy cited the example of what was known as the Swiss contingent, commanded by de Lallée, in the service of Basalat Jang. At the instance of the English, Basalat Jang dismissed the contingent at a moment's notice without even paying the arrears of salary. De Lallée then sought employment first under Nizam Ali, then under the Marathas, and finally entered the service of Haidar Ali; but everywhere he was treated with ignominy, which impaired the prestige and reputation of the French nation. Bussy urged the immediate disavowal by France of any connection with the private contingents in the service of the Indian Princes, and he even opposed the idea of absorbing the troops in the French army, on the ground that they would spread indiscipline and demoralisation among the regulars.

Bussy's scathing criticism was largely justified, as most of the Frenchmen in the service of the Indian Princes were just unscrupulous vagabonds, without any patriotic spirit or military talents sufficient to win the confidence and respect of their masters. But would he have modified his opinion about the utility of keeping Frenchmen in the service of the Indian Princes if he had lived on to see the achievements of de Boigne, Perron and Raymond? It is doubtful. These men had great talents and organising ability, had gained the complete confidence of their masters, and had earned their respect for the French name, but from the purely national point of view they served and could have served but little useful purpose. They had organised armies and had won victories, but they could not have moulded the policies of their masters in the interest of their nation. The days of the young Bussy dominating the Deccan with his small contingent were over.

VIII. *The question of shifting the centre of French power from Pondicherry to Mahé.*

In these political discussions about the future French policy in India one very interesting question arose,—whether in view of past experiences it would be preferable to transfer the centre of French power in India from Pondicherry to Mahé or elsewhere. The Minister of Colonies, Marquis de Castries, was very much in favour of such a transfer, while Bussy was entirely opposed to it. Castries first made the proposal in his letter dated 17th March 1783.[1] He invited Bussy's opinion on the advisability of transferring the principal French establishment from the Coromandel Coast, where the English were strongly entrenched in power, to a convenient spot on the Malabar Coast, preferably Mahé. He gave the following objections to rebuilding Pondicherry for the third time as the centre of French power in India. First, its proximity to Madras exposed it "to be invested in twenty-four hours and to be besieged completely in a few days' time", unless at least "it was turned into a stronghold capable of resisting all attacks, frequently without any previous warning or even declaration of war as on the last occasion". Second, the English had acquired such a dominating position on the Coromandel Coast that in case of war the French could not offer any prolonged resistance without the help of some country Powers. Pondicherry was too far away to receive speedy assistance from any ally. Third, for supplies of provisions and of raw materials for construction work, Pondicherry depended entirely on the Carnatic and Tanjore. The Nawab of the Caranatic and the Raja of Tanjore being under English domination, there was always the risk of supplies being cut off at any moment. Fourth, the cession of Negapatam to the English closed all chances that there might have been of getting assistance from the Dutch.

For these four reasons Castries favoured the transfer of the seat of French power in India from Pondicherry to somewhere else. There remained two other places, Karikal and Mahé. Karikal suffered from the same disadvantages as Pondicherry. On the other hand, Mahé seemed to be the most desirable spot for the purpose, being situated at the borders of the dominions of the Marathas and of Haidar Ali, both potential allies of France in a war with England. One difficulty about Mahé was that the territory was too small and the conversion of the place into a military stronghold would require an enormous expense. But Castries hoped that the transfer of the principal French establishment to the Malabar Coast near his own dominion would offer such advantages to Haidar Ali that he would willingly agree to enlarge the French possession by ceding some territory to the south of Mahé. Castries was so much in favour of the idea that, in case Bussy approved of it, he gave him full authority to enter into negotiations with Haidar Ali at once for the cession of some territory contiguous to Mahé, provided he made no commitment in return, which might lead to a rupture between England and France. He, however, relied on Bussy's judgment and did not like to impose his will against the latter's objections.

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[1] P. A. ms. 491.

Bussy replied to this letter on the 28th September 1783, discussing in detail his objections to the proposal.[1] The only disadvantage of Pondicherry was its proximity to Madras, which exposed it to a sudden attack. Karikal suffered from the same disadvantage after the cession of Negapatam to the English and the establishment of their hold over Tanjore and Trichinopoly. From that point of view the isolated situation of Mahé, far away from the English sphere of influence, offered an advantage. But Mahé suffered from three serious disadvantages. First, the territory was too small and there was no scope for future expansion, being surrounded by the dominions of the potential allies of France. Second, in contrast with Pondicherry which could serve as the *entrepôt* for the finest qualities of cloth, Mahé offered little commercial prospect, the neighbouring countryside producing only some spices. Another difficulty was that there was no suitable port, entry into the river being barred to large vessels. Third, the geographical situation of Mahé, touching the borders of the dominions of Tipu and of the Marathas, would inevitably drag the French into the constant conflicts between the two Powers. "Nothing will ever destroy in the minds of the Marathas the hatred they have against the successor of Haidar." It was true that Tipu "will find his advantage in the establishment of the centre of French power on the Malabar Coast", but Bussy asked, "should we expose ourselves to a rupture with England in defending this man of fortune?" He foresaw an imminent fall of the power of Tipu, and urged that like the English the French should also rely on their own strength and not on any possible assistance from an Indian ally.

Bussy continued that whatever place might be selected for the principal French establishment in India, it was necessary to fortify it strongly and to maintain there a permanent garrison of 1,800 European troops and 2,000 sepoys. If the French Government had the will and the means to make the necessary expenses for such an establishment, Pondicherry was the best place for defence, and incomparably better than Mahé where the hinterland was absolutely closed. On the other hand, if the Government thought that it could not afford such expenses, it was useless merely transferring the principal settlement from the Coromandel to the Malabar Coast. The only thing that could be done in that case was to leave Pondicherry without any fortifications, depending entirely on the goodwill of the English and treating the place merely as a commercial centre.

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[1] P. A. ms. 411.

Bussy wrote to the Minister again on the same subject on the 4th August 1784 and sent him *mémoires* written by two experienced persons, both opposing the idea of transferring the principal French establishment from Pondicherry to Mahé.[1] The greatest objection to Mahé was the certainty of the French being drawn into the constant quarrels between Tipu and the Marathas. Bussy also discussed the question of transferring the centre of French power somewhere else. One suggestion was establishment on the coast of Burma, but Bussy considered it inadvisable and impracticable. Pegu was a land of permanent anarchy. Rangoon was suitable for a settlement, but to conquer and preserve it required large military forces which had to be permanently stationed there. What little was known about the Andaman and Nicobar islands did not suggest the feasibility of establishing a settlement there. Bussy dismissed the projects regarding these places as absolutely chimerical and stated that only two places deserved serious consideration to be the centre of French power in India. Trinkomali was the most desirable, and Bussy recommended the opening of negotiations with the Dutch for the cession of that place. Next to Trinkomali was Pondicherry, best suited for defence; but Bussy was definitely of the opinion that it would be sheer folly to rebuild Pondicherry for the third time as the principal establishment in India, if the French Government was not prepared to make the necessary expenses for its defence.

In the same letter Bussy also gave his opinion about the future of the French power in India. It was in a way his last political testament, coming just five months before his death. It was a gloomy future that he foresaw, considering the state of affairs in India after the peace and the neglect with which France treated her Indian possessions. The English had gained such an accession of strength that the existence of the French possessions in India and even their peaceful trade and commerce depended entirely on the goodwill of the former. The peace had so thoroughly discredited France in the eyes of the Indian Powers that there was little hope of getting any allies in future, unless France purchased them with money, or by sending superior land and naval forces to India had achieved some initial large-scale successes over the English. About the policy to be pursued to redeem French position in India, Bussy wrote: "Send here superior land and naval forces with a large amount of money for distribution. In that case you will be able to gain the attention of the Asiatic Princes. Win some successes, and you will then be able to persuade them to take your side. That is the crux of the matter, specially for us who today do not have, nor expect to have, allies. Anything different that may be said to you on this subject will have originated from charlatanism which has kept the truth covered for such a long time". As regards trading operations, they depended entirely on the political and military position of the French in India, and since it was not imposing, French trade would lie at the mercy of the English.

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[1] P. A. ms. 430 (the two *mémoires* were written by Martin and Lagrenée).

Finally, Bussy summed up his observations in the following words: "There is not the slightest hope, based on reason, to have an establishment in any part of India with an area of land sufficient to meet its annual expenses. There is not the slightest hope to form any alliances from which we could draw the least advantage. There is not the slightest likelihood of being able to carry on in India a trade, free, secure and independent, in conformity with the engagements of His Brittanic Majesty contained in the definitive treaty. In the present situation of the nation or the future, as I foresee it, our commerce, claimed to be free, will always be dependent on the English . . . . . If the Ministry has neither the will nor the ability to make Pondicherry, before the outbreak of a fresh war, an impregnable place, as it is capable of being made, my advice would be not to make more than the indispensable expenses to reconstruct and pallisade its ditches and to leave the other settlements also as they are." In fact, Bussy was so much dejected, thinking of the future of the French in India, that in the same letter he begged for permission to return to France. But he was destined not to see his country any more, and breathed his last on the 7th January 1785 in the land where he had acquired his glory and reputation.

IX. *Death of Bussy.*

Bussy's career came to an abrupt end on the 7th January 1785. His death, though sudden, was not altogether unexpected. Although he was not too old, only sixty-five at the time of his death, twenty years of inactivity and a life of ease and luxury had sapped his vitality. He had been keeping indifferent health even before leaving France. In the Isle of France he was taken seriously ill, which for a moment even seemed to turn fatal. Before he had fully recovered from that illness he started for India, where he passed through a very strenuous time which did not end even after the cessation of hostilities. It was to recoup his health that he changed his seat from Cuddalore to Pondicherry in September 1783, but the strain of protracted negotiations and administrative worries and anxieties proved too much for him. He died suddenly of heart failure. There was a rumour that he had been poisoned, but it was absolutely baseless.[1]

Immediately after Bussy's death Coutenceau, the second-in-command, assumed authority pending orders from France. On the next day, 8th January, he wrote to Castries, informing him of the death of Bussy and of his assumption of office temporarily, pending official instructions.[2] He added that he had also written about the event to the Governors of all the European nations in India and to all the Indian Princes with whom the French were in correspondence. Coutenceau further informed Castries that although he had been told by all the officers of Bussy that the latter had been accorded the honours of a

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[1] Martineau—*Bussy et l'Inde Française*, p. 427.

[2] P. A. ms. 452.

Marshal of France at all the places where he had landed during his voyage from France to India, he had searched all official papers and had found nothing to corroborate that Bussy enjoyed that rank. So he had given instructions that the funeral honours to be accorded were to be in keeping with the official rank of Bussy. Although Coutenceau had justification for denying to Bussy the funeral honours of a Marshal, his dislike of his late chief had been very pronounced all along, and that explains why Bussy was buried, like all others, in the cemetry attached to the Church of Notre Dame des Anges at Pondicherry. In 1787 the body was disinterred and placed in a tomb within the Church as a mark of special honour by the then Governor, Cossigny. In 1793, however, there was a re-transfer to the cemetry outside, as the result of a decision taken by the Revolutionary Colonial Assembly; and although Bussy's tomb still exists, it is rather doubtful as to where exactly his remains lie buried. A sad end for one who had earned a lasting fame in history![1]

X. *An estimate of Bussy.*

In the history of the French in India Bussy occupies a position only next to that of Dupleix. It was his military exploits, from the siege and capture of Jinji, considered impregnable at the time, till the secure establishment of a French protégé as the ruler of the Deccan, which gradually expanded the horizon of the political ambition of Dupleix. There was no abler lieutenant of Dupleix than Bussy to carry out his ambitious projects. And yet the two men were entirely different in their temperaments and political ideas. Dupleix, a man of strong imagination and unbounded ambition, was alone responsible for laying the grand scheme of building a French empire in India. The credit for initiating the new colonial policy, which was adopted by other European nations after him, belonged entirely to Dupleix. Bussy, on the other hand, while serving as the instrument for carrying out that policy, was never in sympathy with it. His famous letter to Dupleix in

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[1] Martineau—*Bussy et l'Inde Française*, pp. 428-442 (about Bussy's tomb).

1753 from Hyderabad, wanting to be recalled to Pondicherry, was a sufficient proof that he neither shared nor comprehended the political views of Dupleix.[1] It was only out of a sense of discipline and obedience to his chief that he stuck to his post in the Deccan, much against his own liking. All his later *mémoires* and letters, after the first phase of the Anglo-French conflict in India, indicate that he had little sympathy for the idea of building up an overseas empire. He assumed command of the expeditionary force to India in 1781 not with the object of reviving the policy of Dupleix, but only to embarrass England as far as possible during the War of American Independence. The pessimistic note in the *mémoires* and letters of Bussy really sprang from this lack of sympathy for the cause of empire-building.

Popular ideas have always based the greatness of Bussy on his military genius. He stands out in popular imagination as a great conquering hero, who first showed the way how Indian Powers could be subjugated by a European nation with a mere handful of well-armed and disciplined troops. His other qualities have been almost wholly overshadowed by what are considered as brilliant military exploits,—the capture of Jinji, the daring march to Aurangabad at a distance of 900 miles from Pondicherry with a handful of French troops, his successful establishment of a French protégé as the ruler of the Deccan against the opposition of internal as well as external enemies, and his securing the grant of a large territory which not only made the French army of occupation independent of the Hyderabad Government but even made it possible to finance French military operations in other parts of India. It is not difficult to understand the reason for this popular conception of the greatness of Bussy, for military exploits more readily capture the imagination of men than the less spectacular qualities of statesmanship, although more successful and of a more enduring value.

In fact, however, Bussy's real claim to greatness rests not so much on his talents as a soldier as on his capacity as a shrewd diplomat and a wise and far-seeing statesman. The capture of Jinji was not in reality such a brilliant feat of arms as is commonly supposed. Nor was the march across 900 miles to the northern limit of the Deccan such an impossibly daring venture, when we consider the absolute lack of resistance and the complete confidence with which he started about the overwhelming superiority of a small number of European troops to badly armed and badly trained Indian hosts. In the French military tradition Bussy could hardly claim a position even in the second rank of men.

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[1] Martineau—*Bussy et l'Inde Française*, pp. 79-80.

What really distinguished Bussy and gave him the title to a permanent place in modern Indian history was his uncommon ability as a diplomat and a statesman. Most of his successes were due to clever negotiations and tactful handling of delicate situations. In the Deccan enterprise his achievement was not the march to Aurangabad, but the preservation of political control over the country against stubborn and ill-concealed opposition. He had a deep and penetrating eye, and possessed a perfect understanding of the Indian temperament. He was the first European who showed how a large part of India could be effectively held under European domination, not so much by force of arms as by a skilful management of the puppet ruler and the leading personalities of the *Darbar* and a combination of firmness with an apparent respect for the government, laws and usages of the country and obedience to the will of the ruler. Bussy's work did not last long, but the example he set was readily copied by the English with more enduring success. The new chapter of Indian history, which saw the beginning and the rapid expansion of English political domination in this country, owed much to the initiative and the methods of Bussy.

The career of Bussy falls into two clearly marked divisions,—first, when as a young man and an able lieutenant of Dupleix he carried French arms as far as Aurangabad and brought the whole of the Deccan under temporary French domination; and second, when as an old man of 63, with a failing health and a legendary reputation, he arrived in India in command of an expeditionary force sent for the purpose not of building a French empire but of destroying the empire built by England, following the way that he and his former chief, Dupleix, had first indicated. Between these two divisions of his career lay a period of about twenty years in France, spent in inactivity, luxury and comfort. In dealing with Bussy's career in India most historians have painted him as much in black in the second part as in bright colours in the first. The only exception is Martineau, who has given a truer and a more dispassionate view of the whole career of Bussy.

The thing is that in discussing the earlier phase of the life of Bussy the imagination of the historian is easily caught by spectacular deeds in war and diplomacy, the absence of which in the later phase has inclined him to a condemnation of the man for vanity, cowardice and muddle-headedness. The change in the Indian political situation, the secure establishment of English power, the difficulties and accidents which Bussy had to face, and the wholly inadequate resources and the little time he had for military operations in India,—these factors are almost completely overlooked; and the failure of the French expedition in 1782-83 is attributed. with scant justice, to the timidity and incapacity of the commander. Little notice is taken of the sustained and plodding work of army administration, and little credit is given for the skilful diplomacy displayed by Bussy in delicate negotiations with the Dutch, Tipu Sultan and the English. While the events of 1782-83 do not entitle Bussy to be ranked as a great military hero, which he in fact never really was, nobody who takes the trouble of going through his voluminous correspondence, *mémoires, Journal* and other relevant documents connected with the French expedition to India can fail to discern the same patience, the same dogged tenacity against adverse circumstances, the same capacity for sustained work, and the same tact and diplomatic *finesse* as he had displayed during the earlier phase of his career.

CHAPTER XV

RESTITUTION OF TERRITORIES AND REVIVAL OF FRENCH TRADE

I. *Restitution of territories.*

Although hostilities in India between the English and the French ceased in July 1783, it was not till nineteen months later that the restitution of territories took place in accordance with the terms of the peace treaty. We have seen already the cause of this delay, even after official news of the definitive peace had reached India in March 1784. Anglo-French negotiations for the execution of the treaty were broken off in July 1784, pending fresh instructions from London. Bussy, who in September 1783 had taken up his residence at Oulgaret, in the country house built by Law de Lauriston, had expected an early restitution of territories and had shown great anxiety to come to a compromise with the English over disputed points. But he was destined not to see the French flag fly again over Pondicherry. It was not till December 1784 that the Governor-General and Council in Calcutta received definite instructions from London about the procedure to be followed for the restitution of territories. A copy of the instructions sent from Calcutta reached Madras about the middle of January 1785, shortly after the death of Bussy.[1] It was Bussy's interim successor, Coutenceau, who had the good fortune to see the final execution of the peace treaty.

On the 19th January the Madras Government nominated Floyer as its agent to hand over Pondicherry, with the two districts of Vilnoor and Bahour, to the French and to receive from them the possession of Cuddalore.[2] On his side, Coutenceau appointed de Boistel to carry out the restitution of territories.[1] Pondicherry with its suburbs was restored to the French on the 1st February, and the two districts of Vilnoor and Bahour on the 10th.[2] A minor difficulty arose over the retention of the customs-posts of the Nawab of the Carnatic in these territories, but ultimately the French had to yield.[3] The other French possessions in India were also restored soon after. On the 26th February de Boistel received possession of Karikal, with the territories belonging to it before the war, from Fallofield representing the Government of Madras.[4] The factory at Masulipatam and the village of Francepeth situated about two miles to the north-west of the town were handed over to Le Forestier on the 16th March.[5] The settlement at Yanam was also restored about the same time. In Bengal Chandernagore and its subordinate factories were restored to Dangereux, who had been sent there as commercial agent a few months earlier.[6] Marin received possession of Mahe on the 15th August.[7] The factory at Surat was not handed over till 1788. In that year de Bruix was appointed French Consul at Surat, and in May he received possession of the factory house and the garden belonging to it.[8]

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[1] P. A. ms. 455 (Coutenceau to Castries, 22nd January 1785).

[2] *Ibid*, ms. 804; also C.R.O.—*The French in India* Series, Vol. XII: Proceedings of Fort St. George relating to the restitution of French territories on the Coromandel Coast in consequence of the Treaty of 1783.

II. *Anglo-French Commercial Convention.*

Even after the restitution of territories disputes between the two nations continued till 1787 over the question of the commercial privileges of the French.[9] The question assumed special importance because of the rapid expansion of English power in India between 1763 and 1783, which nullified in effect the commercial privileges enjoyed by the French Company under the *Farmans* and *Parawanas* of the Indian rulers. The abolition of the French Company in 1769 and later the outbreak of hostilities gave the English in Bengal an opportunity to establish a monopoly over salt, opium and saltpetre, the most lucrative branches of trade. After the conclusion of peace in 1783, the English found themselves threatened with the prospect of losing their monopoly position and of having to share the trade of the country with the French on equal terms. The three Articles of the definitive treaty, 13th, 14th and 15th, which related to the restitution of territories in India, also contained specific provisions assuring complete freedom of commerce to all French subjects in India, trading either individually or collectively through a Company, and enjoyment of all commercial rights and privileges belonging to the old French Company.[1] Immediately after the conclusion of the Preliminaries the Directors of the English Company had sent detailed instructions to the Governor-General and Council in Calcutta about the execution of the treaty provisions relating to trade and commerce. The Directors wrote, "You will assure to French subjects á trade, secure, free and independent, such as had been enjoyed by the last French East India Company, whether the said subjects carry on commerce individually or through a Company............. We desire that you take measures in this respect as may convince them of our sincere intention to assure France the full effect of this article and to remove any occasion for dispute between the two countries."[2]

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[1] P. A. ms. 455.

[2] *Ibid,* ms. 463. The Nawab of the Carnatic had objected to the cession of Vilnoor and Bahour; see his letter to Macartney, dated 27th March 1784 and Macartney's reply dated 1st April; C. R. O.—*The French in India* Series, Vol. VIII, pp. 411-425.

[3] P. A. ms. 476.

[4] *Ibid,* ms. 3986.

[5] *Ibid,* ms. 5190.

[6] C. R. O.—*The French in India* Series, Vol. XII—Wilton's Narrative of his Transactions with the French on the restoration of French possessions in Bengal in consequence of the treaty of 1783.

[7] P. A. ms. 4540.

[8] *Ibid,* mss. 5073, 5074.

[9] C. R. O.—*The French in India* Series, Vol. VI: Reports by Francis Russel Esq., Solicitor to the Rt. Hon'ble the Board of Commissioners for

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the affairs of India on the claims of the French, Dutch, and Danes to exclusive privileges in the East Indies—(1) French claims to trading privileges in Bengal and arguments against them, pp. 3-53; (2) Sketch of French claims in consequence of the treaty of peace, 1783, pp. 128-132; (3) Report on the monopolies in the trade of salt, opium and saltpetre, pp. 375-469; also Vol. XVII—Sketch of the Salt Trade in Bengal so far as is necessary to explain the claims of the French to an exemption from additional import duties in that article of commerce (1787).

[1] Gaudart—*Les Privilèges du Commerce Français dans l'Inde*, p. 8.

[2] P. A. ms. 486; Circular Letter, dated 6th March 1783, from the Court of Directors to their several Presidencies in India relating to the execution of the Treaty of 1783 (C. R. O.—*The French in India* Series, Vol. IX, pp. 79-89).

In spite of the clauses of the treaty and the instructions of the Directors of the English Company, numerous difficulties arose, particularly in Bengal, in giving effect to the provisions relating to French trade and commerce. The English were naturally unwilling to share trade with the French on equal terms in territories conquered by them, and virtually under their sovereignty, such as Bengal and Bihar. They raised all kinds of difficulties for French trading operations. Disputes and minor incidents of violence were of daily occurrence. The most serious of these incidents in Bengal was the firing on a French corvette, the *Espérance,* from the English fort at Budge-Budge in December 1785. In violation of the time-honoured freedom of navigation in the Hooghly, respected by all the European nations from the beginning of their settlements in Bengal, the English had established a customs-post at Budge-Budge and claimed the right of inspecting all foreign ships going up the river. The captain of the *Espérance* refused to submit to such a demand, whereupon the English opened fire from their fort.[1] Dangereux, who was in charge of the Chandernagore settlement, protested to the Government in Calcutta against this and other daily violations of the trading rights of the French, without getting any redress. At Masulipatam also difficulties arose about the freedom of French trade. Le Forestier, the Chief of the French factory carried on an acrimonious correspondence with the English local authorities and later with the Government of Madras on the subject of the exemption from customs duties of all French exports and imports, and in the end he gained a favourable decision from the Madras Council recognising the rights of the French.[2]

Disputes still went on, and in order to end them finally the Governor-General and Council in Calcutta decided in 1786 to send Colonel Cathcart to the Isle of France to negotiate a Commercial Convention with Souillac, the French Governor-General. After a prolonged discussion of all the disputed points a Convention was agreed upon and signed on the 30th April, subject to the approval of the English and French Governments.[1] The English Government, however, disapproved of the Convention, not because of its terms, which were adopted in a later agreement, but on the ground that the Governor-General and Council in Calcutta had no right to conclude a Convention with a foreign Power. Negotiations were resumed in Europe in 1787 between the two Governments, and a new Convention was signed at Versailles on the 31st August with a view to remove all disputes in the execution of the provisions of the treaty of 1783 relating to French commercial rights and privileges.[2] By the first Article of this Convention the English gave an assurance of freedom of trade to French subjects in the Carnatic, Madura, Tanjore, Northern Sarkars, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. By the second Article the French right to import salt into Bengal was restricted to 200,000 maunds. The whole quantity was to be sold to the English Company at 120 rupees for 100 maunds. By the third Article the English agreed to deliver to the French in Bengal 18,000 maunds of saltpetre and 300 chests of opium at prices current before the last war. By the fourth Article French sovereignty was recognised over the settlement at Chandernagore and subordinate factories at Kasimbazar, Dacca, Jougdia, Balasore and Patna. By the next Article French commercial houses elsewhere in Bengal were placed under the laws of the country.

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[1] P. A. ms. 2664 (letter of the captain of the *Espérance* to Dangereux, 8th December 1785, and the latter's protest to the Calcutta Council).

[2] *Ibid,* mss. 5205, 5207, 5212-5215, 5217, 5219.

In transmitting a copy of this Convention to Conway, Governor of Pondicherry, on the 24th November 1787, Comte de Montmorin, Minister of Marine and Colonies, expressed satisfaction at the termination of the long-standing disputes.[3] He also sent a copy of a letter written by the Directors of the English Company to Cornwallis on the subject of the Commercial Convention. While still claiming the right to impose customs duties and to control navigation in the Hooghly, Cornwallis was directed not to exercise the right so as to avoid further disputes with the French.[1] From 1787 to 1793, when the French possessions in India again fell into the hands of the English, their trade was freed from all restrictions and was placed on an equal footing with that of the English.[2]

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[1] P. A. ms. 904 (containing all the papers relating to the negotiations as well as the terms of the Convention finaly drawn up); also C. R. O.—*The French in India* Series, Vol. IX, pp. 1-58—Abstract of the advices from Bengal on the subject of carrying into execution the 13th article of the definitive treaty and restoring the French to their former trade and Establishments in that country with some remarks on the rights claimed by the French and a copy of the Convention concluded by Colonel Cathcart and the French Governor-General at the Mauritius.

[2] *Ibid*, ms. 1002 (Copy of the treaty).

[3] *Ibid*, ms. 1031.

III. *The establishment of the Company of Calonne and its career of misfortune.*

The conclusion of peace and restitution of territories was followed by a sudden development of French trading activities in India, such as had not been seen for many years. The last days of the *Compagnie des Indes* had witnessed a steady decline of trade and commerce, and after its abolition in 1769 French trade in India had dwindled almost to nothing. The main factor responsible for the rapid expansion of French trading activities in India after the war was the establishment in 1785 of a new *Compagnie des Indes,* commonly known as the Company of Calonne from the initiative taken by Calonne, the *Controleur-Général.* The Company was established by a Royal *Arrêt* dated 24th April 1785, and another *Arrêt* of the 15th May appointed twelve Administrators, of whom one, Moracin, was appointed Administrator-General in India.[3] It was granted a monopoly of trade in the East for fifteen years. The share capital, originally fixed at 20 million livres, was later allowed to be increased to 40 millions by a Royal *Arrêt* dated 21st September 1786.

The Company of Calonne, which started on such a large scale and with high hopes of being able to capture a substantial part of the Eastern trade, had a most unfortunate career. It was established at an inauspicious moment, just on the eve of the Revolution, which threw France into a long period of chaos and confusion. For the first five years the Company showed unusual vigour in pushing French trade in the East, investing a considerable amount of capital and reaping profits which fully justified its ventures. The very success of the new Company, however, proved its undoing, by rousing the jealousy of the other French merchants against its privilege of monopoly in a branch of trade which proved so lucrative. On the outbreak of the Revolution the enemies of the Company carried their opposition to success in the National Assembly, which in April 1790 abolished its monopoly privilege and threw open the Eastern trade to all French merchants. The sudden abolition of its monopoly privilege, just five years after its establishment, was a staggering blow to the Company. But it made a heroic struggle for survival, and for the next three years it carried on trading operations in the East as a private organisation, on a somewhat diminished scale but with profits which were as great as before. It roused the jealousy of its enemies once more, who in order to better achieve their object brought an accusation that the Company had placed large sums of money at the disposal of Louis XVI to organise a counter-revolution. Although entirely baseless, the charge was upheld by the Convention, and by three successive decrees, dated 26th July and 8th October 1793 and 3rd September 1794, the Company was totally abolished and its property confiscated. It was also forbidden for any trading society to assume the name of the *Compagnie des Indes* in future. The shareholders of the Company put up a stubborn fight, brought up their case before every successive Government in France, and it was not till 1875 that the matter was finally closed.

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[1] P. A. ms. 1002.

[2] About the history of French trading privileges in India a connected account will be found in Gaudart's *Les Privilèges du Commerce Français dans l'Inde.*

[3] P. A. mss. 831, 836.

IV. *The trading operations of the Company.*

Regarding the trading operations of the Company of Calonne, detailed information is available in the correspondence of the agents of the Company in India with the Administrators in Paris, preserved in the Pondicherry Archives and published by Gaudart in 1931.[1] For the first five years, when the Company enjoyed monopoly privilege, the direction of its affairs in India was in the able hands of Moracin, *Commissaire-Général* of the Marine and *Ordonnateur* at Pondicherry. He had been living in India since 1765, and while serving as a State Official he also carried on private trade and amassed a considerable fortune. His trade connections had gained him high reputation at Madras and Calcutta. He was therefore the ablest man to direct the affairs of the Company in India, but it soon proved inconvenient to combine the functions of an administrator with those of a commercial agent. The interests of the Government and of the Company sometimes appeared incompatible, and Moracin received many complaints from the Administrators in Paris of a sacrifice of the Company's interests. In September 1789 he resigned from the posts of *Commissaire-Général* and *Ordonnateur* in order to free himself from administrative responsibilities and to be able to devote his whole attention to the affairs of the Company. But a few months later he accepted another position which put him into great embarrassment in the discharge of his functions as the agent of a commercial organisation, with a monopoly privilege which made it unpopular among the citizens of Pondicherry. On the 1st March 1790 he was elected President of the Committee set up by the citizens of Pondicherry on the news of the Revolution in Paris. The Committee demanded the abolition of the Company's monopoly privilege, and Moracin, as President, had to support it, as he realised that opposition was wholly fruitless. Soon after, the French National Assembly decreed the abolition of the Company's privilege and threw open the Eastern trade to all merchants, news of which reached India by an English boat which arrived in Calcutta in August.

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[1] P. A.—Registres 11, 12 (*Inventaire des Anciennes Archives de l'Inde Francaise*); Gaudart—*Correspondance des Agents à Pondichéry de la nouvelle Compagnie des Indes avec les Administrateurs à Paris,* 1788-1803.

The credit of the Company, already somewhat impaired by the attacks of its adversaries, thus suffered a heavy blow. Moracin, finding himself in a difficult position, handed over his charge to a committee on the 1st February 1791, and on the 15th left for France, where he assumed the duties of an administrator of the private trading society which succeeded the old monopoly Company. In the meantime the Company appointed Simon Lagrenée de Mezières as its Agent-General in India. The latter had also been resident in India for a long time and had been an employee of the old *Compagnie des*

Indes. He had, like Moracin, great ability and commercial experience. But he remained at his post only for a brief period. The new trading society, successor to the old monopoly Company, wanted to reduce administrative costs by replacing salaries by a 3 per cent commission to its employees. At the same time the number of agencies was also reduced to four,—Pondicherry, Bengal (the agency had been shifted from Chandernagore to Calcutta on the outbreak of troubles in the French settlement), Mahé and Canton. At Pondicherry the direction of affairs was placed in the hands of a committee of three, Combemale, Blin de Grincourt and Richardin, till the total suppression of the Company in 1793.

During the first five years, when the Company enjoyed monopoly privilege, the volume of its trade was quite considerable. Every year it sent out a large number of ships, and the cost of annual equipments averaged nearly 15 million livres. Its trading operations extended from Canton to Mocha and Suez. Extension of trade to the latter region was of special importance, facilitating the establishment of a quicker postal service, by which letters from Paris could reach India in less than three months in place of six or seven months by the other route, via the Cape. The principal articles of Eastern merchandise carried to Europe by the French ships included, besides the cotton manufactures of various types of the Coromandel Coast; saltpetre from Bengal, pepper from Mahé and coffee from Mocha, cowries, sandalwood, rattan-cane, raw hide, senna, gum-arabic, incense, myrrh and ostrich feathers. The Company sent out to India both European merchandise as well as considerable sums in cash. For many years the French settlements in India had not seen such an influx of money as between 1786 and 1790. Even then the agents of the Company had a difficult task in making all the purchases demanded from India, their value far exceeding the amount received in cash and merchandise. Money for the balance had to be found by drawing bills on the Company in Paris. Moracin's credit and reputation stood so high at both Madras and Calcutta that his personal guarantee made the bills readily acceptable at those places. After 1789, however, on the news of the Revolution in Paris and of the persistent attacks on the monopoly privilege of the

Company, it became extremely difficult for Moracin to find credit in India against bills drawn on the Company.

Just before the outbreak of the Revolution the Company had once thought of seeking from the Government all the rights and privileges regarding territorial administration in India which had been granted to the earlier Companies of Colbert and Law. At its request Moracin drew up an estimate of the revenues and expenses of the different French settlements in India. The revenues amounted to 1200,000 livres, and the expenses, as fixed by the home Government in 1789, to 700,000 livres. Moracin wanted the balance of 500,000 livres to be spent on a programme of construction of defensive works in the various settlements.[1] However, the idea fizzled out on the outbreak of the Revolution, and a few months later the Company lost even the single privilege which it enjoyed, namely monopoly of trade.

The abolition of the monopoly privilege of the Company brought about a sudden reduction in the volume of trade. The successor to the monopoly Company suppressed some of the agencies, those at Mocha and Yanam, to reduce the cost of establishment; and as the political situation in France deteriorated there was a rapid fall in the demand for Eastern merchandise. The Company, however, carried on its trading operations, although on a diminished scale, down to the siege and capture of Pondicherry in August 1793. The terms of capitulation had assured property rights and liberty of trade to the citizens of Pondicherry, and the Company could have continued its commercial operations even after 1793. But the total suppression of the Company and the confiscation of its goods in France prevented the continuance of its trade in India under the terms of capitulation.

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[1] Gaudart—*Correspondance des Agents à Pondichery de la nouvelle Compagnie des Indes avec les Administrateurs à Paris,* pp. 33-49 (letter dated 10th September 1789).

CHAPTER XVI

PONDICHERRY (1785-1793)

I. *Pondicherry after the War.*

Pondicherry, after its restitution in 1785, was in a rather sad plight, facing economic hardships and political uncertainty. There was a general spirit of despair and frustration among the inhabitants. Their trade and commerce had been ruined completely during the war. Nor did the peace bring them any consolation. They had hoped for economic recovery after the war, but were rudely disappointed by the establishment of a new Company with a monopoly of the Eastern trade. Only the inland trade was left open to private merchants, but in view of the political situation in the country, it did not amount to much, and came to be virtually restricted to the sending of 200,000 maunds of salt to Bengal under the Commercial Convention of 1787. All hopes of a revival of the political status of Pondicherry were equally destroyed by the policy adopted by the home Government after the peace of 1783. The war had completely dislocated the finances of the French Government and had brought it to the verge of bankruptcy. The Government had thus little liking for colonial expansion; its primary concern was to make economies in administration. In this drive for economy even the ordinary requirements of defence of the Indian possessions were neglected. The Indian settlements were denuded of practically all European troops, munitions and other military stores belonging to Bussy's expeditionary force, and only a small number of sepoys were retained for the maintenance of law and order. Besides, all the French possessions in the East were grouped into one administration, under a Governor-General with his seat in the Isle of France.

Thus all on a sudden Pondicherry lost its pride of place as a capital and found itself reduced to the status of a dependency. The policy of the French Government after 1783 was to retain the Indian possessions merely as commercial centres and not for any political or military objective. It was a complete reversal of the policy pursued for nearly half a century; and the abruptness of the change made it all the more unpopular among the inhabitants of Pondicherry and of the other settlements, who accused the home Government of a betrayal of national interests, in giving up all political ambitions in India and leaving the settlements at the tender mercy of the English. It was this feeling of resentment at the policy of the home Government that was largely responsible for the outbreak of revolutions in the different settlements five years later.

II. *Succession of Governors.*

The history of Pondicherry, as indeed of the other French settlements in India, from its restitution in 1785 to its capture by the English in 1793, falls into two clearly marked divisions, the first from 1785 to 1790, and the second from 1790 to 1793. The interest of the first period lies in the efforts made by successive Governors to re-organise the administration in accordance with the strict economy measures prescribed by the home Government. In the second period interest is centred on the activities of the citizens of Pondicherry following the news of the Revolution in Paris. To a large extent it was the administrative measures of the first period, rousing bitter resentment among the inhabitants of the colony, which influenced the course of events in the second.

The period from 1785 to 1790 was marked by a rapid succession of Governors,—six in the course of five years. It was hardly conducive to administrative efficiency, and no Governor remained in office for a sufficient length of time to devote himself to the urgent work of reconstruction and to carry out ameliorative measures. The quick changes in office produced a feeling of political uncertainty, as each Governor, fearing unpopularity, tried to pass on to his successor the thankless task of executing the administrative reforms ordered by the Ministry in Paris. On the sudden death of Bussy in January 1785, Coutenceau, next in command, assumed charge pending instructions from Paris. He, however, remained in office only for a few months and had just the time to take possession of the French settlements in India from the hands of the English. Even before the death of Bussy the Ministry had decided to nominate Souillac, Governor of the Isle of France, as his successor while granting Bussy's request for permission to return to France.[1] Souillac arrived from the Isle of France in May 1785, but he remained at Pondicherry only for four months and a half. In October he left for the Isle of France to take up his new post as Governor-General of all the French possessions in the East, in pursuance of an administrative re-organisation decided upon by the French Government in May 1785. Souillac had merely carried to Pondicherry the instructions of the home Government about the economy measures to be introduced, but he did not get the time even to begin their execution. He left as his successor at Pondicherry Charpentier de Cossigny, who, it will be remembered, had been in command of the French detachment placed at the disposal of Tipu in 1783. Cossigny remained in office for nearly two years, but in order to avoid unpopularity he proceeded slowly in the execution of the instructions of the Ministry. In September 1787 he left Pondicherry to take up his new appointment as Governor of the Isle of Bourbon.

Cossigny was succeeded as Governor of Pondicherry by Comte de Conway, who had been in command of the French troops at the Cape of Good Hope during the last war. Conway was in office for two years, and made himself thoroughly unpopular in trying to execute all at once the administrative changes and economy measures prescribed by the Ministry. The fact of his Irish origin added to the public resentment and roused suspicion among the French in India, who still regarded the name of Lally, also of Irish origin, as synonymous with treachery. The extent of the popular feeling against him is evident from the following remark of Bury de St. Fulgence, a prominent citizen and a wealthy merchant of Pondicherry: "A man as restless, as violent and as wicked as our General is never fit to govern colonies .... It is to be hoped that a second attack of apoplexy will rid us of this man."[2] In October 1789 Conway left for the Isle of France to take up his new appointment as Governor-General, nominating de Fresne as Governor of Pondicherry. To de Fresne was left the task of completing the execution of the instructions of the Ministry and particularly sending all the remaining European troops to the Isle of France, leaving Pondicherry completely defenceless. The 'evacuation' of Pondicherry was, however, prevented by the arrival of the news of the Revolution in Paris and the combination of the citizens of the colony to oppose the withdrawal of troops. De Fresne proved to be a very capable administrator, and it was mainly due to his tact and *sang-froid* that the excesses of a popular revolution were averted at Pondicherry.

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[1] P.A. ms. 790.

[2] Labernadie—*La Revolution et les Etablissements Français dans l'Inde*, p. 18.

III. *Administrative re-organisation and economy measures.*

Let us next turn our attention to the administrative reforms carried out during the five years between the restitution of Pondicherry and the Revolution. The new regime was inaugurated by two Royal Ordinances granting an amnesty to all army deserters.[1] The first measure of administrative re-organisation was the establishment of a new *Conseil Supérieur* at Pondicherry by a Royal *Édit* of August 1784, which suppressed the old *Conseil* established in February 1776.[2] The new *Conseil* consisted of the Governor, the Intendant, the seniormost administrative officer and a few merchants or distinguished citizens nominated by the Governor. It was vested with both civil and criminal jurisdiction and also functioned as a court of appeal for cases coming from the other settlements. The main difficulty in the working of the new *Conseil* was that the members were not paid any salary, and it was hard to find distinguished persons sufficiently public-spirited to offer honorary services. The measure of economy ultimately proved a failure, and it was found necessary to create other paid posts for those nominated as members of the *Conseil*.[3] Besides the *Conseil Supérieur*, there was established a Committee of Administration by Conway soon after his assumption of office at

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[1] P. A. mss. 800, 822.

[2] *Ibid*, ms. 787.

[3] *Ibid*, ms. 859 (letter from Blin de Grincourt to Marin at Mahé, dated 8th Oct. 1785, giving details of the new administrative set-up and its defects)

Pondicherry in 1787.[1] The function of this Committee was to help the Governor in the administration of the different settlements in India. Conway also re-established in December 1787 a Consultative Chamber, composed of Indian notables.[2] This body had been first set up in January 1778 by an *arrêt* of the *Conseil Supérieur.*

The most important of the measures of administrative re-organisation decided upon for the sake of economy was the amalgamation, by a Royal *Édit* of May 1785, of all the French possessions east of the Cape of Good Hope into one Government. The seat of the Governor-General was to be Port Louis in the Isle of France. Under him were to be two Governors, one residing in the Isle of Bourbon and the other at Pondicherry. The Governor of Pondicherry was vested with administrative control over the other settlements in India, but their relationship with the Pondicherry authorities and with the Government of Port Louis was not very clear. While being subordinate to the Pondicherry authorities in matters of normal administration, they, particularly Chandernagore, had also the right of directly approaching the Government of Port Louis. Such a relationship was bound to lead to confusion, and in fact it was one of the contributory causes to the disorders at Chandernagore in 1790. The shifting of the capital from Pondicherry to Port Louis was of great political significance, indicating that France had definitely abandoned her ambitions in India. For it was obviously impossible to maintain close diplomatic relations with the Indian Powers and to plan military intervention from such a long distance as the Isle of France. The shifting of the capital had its natural sequence in the withdrawal of all European troops, munitions and other military stores to the Isle of France. Pondicherry was henceforth to stand as a defenceless city, a mere commercial centre without any political significance.

Considerable efforts were made by every successive Governor to reduce the cost of administration by abolishing many posts and lowering scales of salary. The number of clerks was reduced to eight and that of interpreters to two.[1] There is in the Pondicherry Archives a detailed account of the monthly expenditure of the Government under different heads, drawn up in September 1786 by Moracin, the Intendant.[2] The total amount fixed for Pondicherry by the home Government was 228,000 livres. Even greater economy was introduced in the military department than in civil administration. Since Pondicherry had ceased to be a capital and had lost its political importance altogether, there was no need to maintain troops there. All the European troops were ordered to be withdrawn to the Isle of France, only a sepoy force to be left at Pondicherry, more for police duties than for defence. Even the strength of this force was to be reduced to 1200 men, with seven European officers.[3] It, was, however, found difficult to execute the order of withdrawing all European troops to the Isle of France, leaving Pondicherry completely defenceless, and there remained nearly three hundred of them in February 1790, when the *Bienvenue* carried the instructions of Conway for the completion of the 'evacuation' of Pondicherry. The opposition of the citizens and the political wisdom of de Fresne prevented the execution of such a drastic order.

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[1] P. A. ms. 1006 (containing the Proceedings of the Committee from 1787 to 1789).

[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 1039.

In an important political despatch, dated 14th February 1787, Castries outlined to Souillac the policy of the French Government with respect to the Indian possessions.[4] The administration of Pondicherry, Mahé, Karikal, Yanam and Chandernagore was to be retained by the King, while that of the other settlements and factories was to be transferred to the new Company of Calonne. There was absolutely no need of rebuilding the fortifications at Pondicherry. In the existing state of affairs it would be sufficient to protect the town with a ditch and, if necessary, with some earth-works. This directive of Castries put an end to the plan of defence-construction at Pondicherry, a scheme of which was drawn up by the engineer, La Lustière, in September 1785.[5] La Lustière had taken in hand the construction of a military hospital, barracks and arsenals, and the completion of the canal running through the town, started under Law to divide the Indian from the European quarter. He had travelled to Jaffinapatam in Ceylon for procuring materials of construction.[1] But his scheme had to be finally abandoned when Castries gave his second directive in June 1787 that he considered it quite sufficient to encircle the town with a sloping earthen wall "just to prevent desertion and to maintain order".[2]

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[1] P.A. ms. 859.
[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 917.
[3] *Ibid.*, ms. 859.
[4] *Ibid.*, ms. 960.
[5] *Ibid.*, ms. 887.

In April 1789 more stringent instructions were sent from France with the object of making further economy in administration. The total expenses of all the French possessions in India were fixed at 700,000 livres, and the sepoy force was to be further reduced to one battalion of 500 men only.[3] These orders Conway received at the time of his departure for the Isle of France in October, and for their execution he left instructions to his successor, de Fresne.[4] Conway's instructions are highly interesting, showing the object to be pursued by the administrators in the different settlements. They were to concern themselves with developing commerce, rendering prompt and impartial justice and augmenting revenues. Thus political objective was totally lost sight of. In the light of the definite abandonment by France of her previous policy in India, the attempts to do honour to the heroes of the past appear rather curious. The remains of Bussy and Duchemin were reburied within the Capuchin Church and tombs were constructed for them befitting national heroes. For the first time the name of Dupleix was sought to be permanently preserved by giving it to one of the bastions of Pondicherry.[5]

IV. *Revenues and expenses of the different settlements.*

A detailed account of the revenues and expenses of the different French settlements in India is available in a letter of Moracin, dated 10th September 1789 and addressed to the

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[1] P. A. mss. 971, 978, 989.

[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 987.

[3] *Ibid.*, mss. 1133.

[4] *Ibid.*, ms. 1162.

[5] *Ibid.*; ms. 1095 (letter from Minister La Luzerne to Conway, 10th Oct. 1788).

Administrators of the Company in Paris.[1] The occasion for drawing up this account was the desire of the Company to take over from the Government the administration of the Indian possessions. The project, however, did not materialise, and shortly after the outbreak of the Revolution the Company was even deprived of its commercial monopoly.

Moracin estimated the total revenues of Pondicherry at 483,000 livres (1 rupee = 2½ livres). They were distributed under seven heads: (1) territorial revenue of the ten villages originally belonging to Pondicherry —30,000 livres; (2) territorial revenue of Vilnoor and Bahour, consisting of eighty-two villages, added to Pondicherry by the treaty of 1783—100,000 livres; (3) seigneurage from the minting of coins—100,000 livres; (4) farming of the cocoanut trees on the high-ways—30,000 livres; (5) tax on imports by land and sea (kept in abeyance for three years from the restitution of Pondicherry as a special relief to the citizens)—96,000 livres; (6) farming of the sale of betel, tobacco, arrack and other spirituous liquors—100,000 livres; (7) other sources—27,000 livres. Next came Karikal. Besides the original possession consisting of fourteen villages, the treaty of 1783 added four other territories (which Dupleix had obtained from the Raja of Tanjore in 1749 and which were lost to the French by the treaty of 1763) known in French official records as *Magans* or *Maganons.* The total revenues of Karikal amounted to 150,000 livres, of which territorial revenue constituted the principal part. Mahé yielded a total revenue of 6,000 livres, which, Moracin hoped, could be raised to 15,000 to 20,000 if Tipu returned the villages granted to the French by an arrangement between Haidar and Bellecombe in 1777, as also the territory of the ruler of Kadattanad which was under French control before the war and which came to be occupied by Tipu. Yanam produced a total income of nearly 8,000 livres, consisting of territorial revenue and some local taxes. There was scope for a considerable increase of revenue by fully exploiting the rich salt beds of the place.

There remained only Chandernagore. It yielded a substantial revenue from the sale of salt, opium and saltpetre, which was utilised for giving doles to poor French families in the different settlements. The territorial revenue of Chandernagore amounted to 60,000 livres. By the Commercial Convention of 1787 the English agreed to hand over to the French administration in India 300 chests of opium and 18,000 maunds of saltpetre at Patna price, the sale of which yielded a profit of 100,000 livres and 45,000 livres respectively. By the same treaty the French were allowed to import into Bengal 200,000 maunds of salt. The trade in salt was actually carried on by private French merchants from the different settlements, to whom permits were sold by the Government. The sale of these permits (and not the profits made by the merchants) yielded an income of 300,000 livres. Thus the total revenue amounted to over 500,000 livres, of which nearly 445,000, being the profits of the Government from the sale of salt, opium and saltpetre, were utilised for charity. One effect of this arrangement was that the inhabitants of Chandernagore bore a grudge against the other settlements for depriving them of what they considered to be their legitimate due, the full benefit of the trade in Bengal. This feeling was of great consequence and was largely responsible for the refusal of Chandernagore to submit to the Pondicherry authorities during the revolutionary days of 1790-93.

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[1] Gaudart—*Correspondance des Agents à Pondichéry de la nouvelle Compagnie des Indes avec les Administrateurs à Paris,* pp. 33-49.

As regards expenses, drastic reductions were made for the sake of economy. In April 1789 the French Government sent instructions to Conway, newly appointed as Governor-General, to limit the expenses of the Indian settlements to 700,000 livres. That entailed, besides cuts in civil administration, the withdrawal of all European troops from India and the reduction of the sepoy force to 500 only. In his letter Moracin strongly argued against such a policy, which would leave the French settlements in India defenceless not only against external attacks but also against internal commotions. He urged the need of maintaining at least 500 European troops, including about 100 men for artillery, and 1,200 sepoys, and he showed how it could be done within the financial means of the French administration in India. The total revenues of the different settlements amounted to nearly 1,200,000 livres a year, which would be fully available for civil and military expenses if the income derived from the sale of opium, salt and saltpetre be not spent on charity. Since the home Government had fixed the total expenses at 700,000 livres, there would be left a balance of 500,000 livres, which could be utilised for the maintenance of 500 European troops and the construction of some defence works at Pondicherry considered absolutely necessary.

V. *The beginning of the Revolution.*

The five years following the restoration of territories in 1785 were marked by the accummulation of a series of grievances for the inhabitants of Pondicherry,—the deprivation of trading facilities by the establishment of a new monopoly Company, the loss of the status of a capital for their town and its subordination to the Government of the Isle of France, the drastic reductions in civil administration, the withdrawal of practically all European troops and munitions, the refusal to construct defence works considered absolutely necessary in the light of past experience, and in short the general apathy and indifference of the home Government to the future of the Indian possessions. Pondicherry was in a highly agitated frame of mind and required only a slight spark to start a conflagration.

Since the beginning of 1790 news had been reaching through English sources about strange happenings in France following the meeting of the States-General. On the 22nd February 1790 there arrived a boat from the Isle of France, the *Bienvenue*, carrying the orders of Conway to complete the withdrawal of European troops, artillery and munitions from Pondicherry, and also authentic news about the Revolution in France. The news of the Revolution was bewildering but nonetheless pleasing to the citizens, who attributed all their hardships since 1785 to the indifference and incompetence of the Ministry of the old regime. What agitated them more was the move to take away the remaining 260 European soldiers and 30 artillerymen, leaving them completely defenceless at a time when war was going on between Tipu Sultan and the English and there seemed every possibility of hostilities spreading to the borders of the French settlement. Excitement ran high, and following the example of Paris the citizens of Pondicherry met in a General Assembly on the 25th February in front of the Government House to express their determination to resist the execution of the Ministerial orders regarding the withdrawal of troops. They also demanded the formation of a citizen militia and the handing over to them of the arsenal and the powder magazine. That was the beginning of the revolution at Pondicherry, which, thanks to the tact of the Governor, de Fresne, and the sobriety and wisdom of the leading citizens, was kept within proper limits and did not degenerate into lawlessness and anarchy as in France or even at Port Louis or Chandernagore.

On the 26th February the citizens met again and decided to send a deputation to the Governor to present their demands. The deputation consisted of six persons and the demands presented to the Governor were signed by 83 citizens,—a rather significant fact, showing that the origin of the movement was due to the energy of only a small part of the European population, not to speak of the Indian inhabitants, who were left out completely. De Fresne had the coolness and sagacity to meet the novel situation and assured the citizens' delegation of his sympathy and support, thus avoiding a possibility of clash between the revolutionary elements and the established authorities. On the 28th anonymous posters on the door of the Church of Notre Dame des Anges invited all the citizens to meet next day in the house of a leading merchant, Bury de St. Fulgence. The invitation met with a good response, and on the 1st March the citizens formed a General Assembly under the presidentship of Moracin, the Administrator of the new *Compagnie des Indes*, in order to present the grievances of the French in India to the National Assembly in Paris. De Fresne accepted the situation with a good grace, and on the 2nd March at a solemn ceremony held at the Government House itself he administered to the members of the General Assembly the oath of loyalty to "the Nation, to His Majesty and to the Laws".[1] It is interesting to notice here that the French citizens of Pondicherry were in no mood to carry the new Revolutionary principles of 'equality' and 'fraternity' to their logical conclusion by admitting the Indian inhabitants in the General Assembly. The latter were deliberately excluded in spite of their desire to join the movement. From the beginning to the end the revolution in India was confined only to the French citizens and did not touch the Indian inhabitants, who merely looked on as curious spectators.

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[1] For an account of the beginning of the revolution at Pondicherry see Labernadie—*La Revolution et les Etablissements Français dans l'Inde*, pp. 24-30.

Soon after the oath-taking ceremony the General Assembly proceeded to the election of a permanent Committee of 65 members, to remain in office for eighteen months. The principal task of the Committee was to place before the National Assembly in Paris the wishes and grievances of the French citizens in India, in conformity with a decree of that Assembly inviting the opinion of each colony about the system of administration best suited to promote the welfare and prosperity of its inhabitants. The first Committee actually remained in existence from March to September 1790. Entering into office on the 14th March, it proceeded at once to the drawing up of six *mémoires* for the National Assembly, on the model of the *Cahiers* drawn up on the eve of the meeting of the States-General in France. The first of the *mémoires* dealt with the situation of the French in India before the arrival of the *Bienvenue*; the second prayed for the privilege of sending two representatives from India to the National Assembly; the third was an exposition of the advantages of trade with India; the fourth demanded freedom of commerce; the fifth dealt with the necessity of political and military influence in India as a prerequisite to trade and commerce, and insisted on freeing Pondicherry from subordination to the Isle of France and maintaining it as a strong and well-defended place; and the last discussed the question of forming alliances with some of the Indian Powers.[1] The *mémoires* were entrusted to Kerjean (a nephew of Dupleix), Delarche and Beylié, who started by the *Royal Elizabeth* at the end of March. On their arrival in France, Kerjean and Delarche delegated their powers to Monneron in accordance with the instructions of the Committee.

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[1] P.A. Reg. 50 (*Inventaire des Anciennes Archives de l'Inde Française*).

VI. *The Revolution from April 1790 to June 1791.*

After the departure of the delegates for France there followed a period of calm for about four months. The Committee of Representatives worked in accord with the Governor, who also adapted himself to the new situation with the best grace possible. Measures were taken to form a citizen militia,[1] and in May some additional troops were sent to Pondicherry from the Isle of France to increase the number of the garrison to 400,[2]—two steps which gave satisfaction to the revolutionary elements. During the interval there broke out a revolution at Chandernagore, which speedily degenerated into anarchy, as will be narrated later. The Committee of Representatives at Pondicherry under the influence of sober and steady people expressed condemnation of the lawless actions of the Chandernagore revolutionaries, which brought it into conflict with the Committee of Representatives of the Isle of France.[3] In the Isle of France also extremists had gained control of the revolutionary movement, leading to differences with the established administrative authorities, so much so that towards the end of July the Governor-General Conway returned to France, leaving Cossigny as his successor.[4]

Although Pondicherry was free from the excesses which characterised the revolutionary movement at Chandernagore and the Isle of France, it was not altogether free from mischief-makers out to foment troubles. In June the Committee of Representatives complained to de Fresne against these troublesome elements and demanded their expulsion.[5] Matters came to a head in August during discussions in the Committee about the formation of a municipal body for Pondicherry. There were sharp differences over the question of admitting Indians into that body, their cause having been espoused by the extremists just to gain power. In one of the exciting sittings of the Committee, held on the 20th August, the latter were thoroughly worsted, thanks to the energy of the President, Comte de Civrac. Seven of them were condemned as dangerous agitators and shipped back to France.[1] These men pleaded their cause before the National Assembly in Paris, and ultimately in March 1792 obtained a decree acquitting them of the charge and permitting them to return to India.

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[1] P. A. ms. 1233.

[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 1246.

[3] *Ibid.*, mss. 1278, 1285 (Letters from the Pondicherry Committee to the Committee of the Isle of France, 22nd July and 17th August 1790).

[4] *Ibid.*, ms. 1279 (Letters from Conway to de Fresne, 25th July, 1790).

[5] *Ibid.*, ms. 1260 (Extract from the Register of the Deliberations of the Representative Committee).

The menace of troublesome elements led the Committee of Representatives to convoke a General Assembly of citizens in September. The latter proceeded to the setting up of a Municipality, electing a Mayor and five members. It also constituted a new permanent Committee of 27 members, inviting for the first time representatives from the other French settlements in India.[2] These measures restored peace at Pondicherry for a few months, and the Governor, the Municipality and the second Committee worked in perfect accord. In March 1791 a letter was received from the deputies of the Pondicherry citizens in the National Assembly in Paris, containing the information that the National Assembly had accepted two representatives from India and had decreed the abolition of the trading monopoly of the Calonne Company.[3] This recognition by the National Assembly and the acceptance of one of the principal demands of the citizens of Pondicherry somewhat emboldened the second Committee. Assuming an exaggerated air of importance, it came into conflict with the Governor and the Municipality, and Pondicherry was again threatened with disorder and administrative dislocation. The situation, however, was saved by convoking for the third time a General Assembly in June 1791, which ended the authority of the Committee. The latter, before passing out of existence, addressed an appeal to the citizens recalling the services it had rendered during the few months of its office.[4]

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[1] P. A. ms. 1299 (Letter from the General Assembly of Citizens at Pondicherry to the National Assembly of France, 6th Sept. 1790).

[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 1319.

[3] *Ibid.*, ms. 1290.

[4] *Ibid.*, ms. 1399. For a detailed account of the work of the Committee and the General Assembly from April 1790 to July 1791 see Registers 50-54 (*Inventaire des Anciennes Archives de l'Inde Francaise, Pondichéry*).

VII. *The Constitution of July 1791 and the work of the Colonial Assembly (July 1791—Sept. 1792).*

The third General Assembly proceeded to the formation of a new organisation for all the French settlements in India. Meeting in the Capuchin Church on the 5th July 1791, it adopted a project of constituting a Colonial Assembly of 21 members,—15 for Pondicherry, 3 for Chandernagore, and one each for Karikal, Yanam and Mahé. In each settlement all the French inhabitants, not below the age of 25 and having lived in India for at least two years, were to constitute a General Assembly for electing representatives to the Colonial Assembly. There was also provision for the election from each settlement of supplementary members to take the place of the regular ones in case of their temporary absence. The Colonial Assembly was to be re-elected by half every year. Foreseeing the possibility of opposition on the part of some of the other settlements to join the Colonial Assembly, the Constitution fixed a time-limit for the election of their representatives. If within that period any settlement failed to elect its representative or representatives, the Colonial Assembly was to make up the number by taking more representatives from Pondicherry. The Colonial Assembly thus constituted was to exercise the legislative power delegated to each colony by the National Assembly by its decrees of 8th and 28th March 1790. The executive power was to vest in the Governor, and the judiciary was kept as it was. It was also expressly stipulated that no taxes could be imposed without the consent of the Colonial Assembly.[1]

The new Assembly was set up on the 6th July, with representatives from Pondicherry alone. On the 11th it sent circular letters to the other settlements to send their representatives,[2] but only Karikal and Yanam responded to the invitation. Mahé did not send any representative, and Chandernagore, where extremists had gained control, flatly refused to recognise the authority of the Colonial Assembly and drew up a new constitution for itself with the support of the Assembly of the Isle of France. There started an acrimonious dispute between Pondicherry, Chandernagore and the Isle of France. The Colonial Assembly of Pondicherry protested against the intervention of the Isle of France in the affairs of Chandernagore, denied its subordination to the Government of the Isle of France, and asserted that Pondicherry alone had authority over all the French settlements in India.[1] Finally, it sent its President, Fumeron, to Chandernagore on a conciliatory mission, which however proved a failure.[2] On the other hand, the Chandernagore Committee issued an appeal for insurrection to the Pondicherry garrison, which the latter rejected with contempt.[3]

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[1] P. A. ms. 1423 (Constitutional Decree of the General Assembly).
[2] *Ibid,* ms. 1426.

The Colonial Assembly, elected in July 1791, remained in power till December 1792, when it was replaced by a new organisation following the arrival of two Civil Commissioners, Lescallier and Dumorier, sent by the French National Assembly. For the most part the Colonial Assembly worked in perfect accord with the Governor, and peace was preserved at Pondicherry. The period was marked by a few exciting events and patriotic demonstrations. On the 2nd August the new tri-colour flag was hoisted in a great public ceremony.[4] On the 14th April 1792 was held another public ceremony, when before a gathering of all the citizens the decree of the National Assembly concerning the organisation of St. Domingo as a model for all the colonies was read out. The meeting took an enthusiastic decision about the abolition of all titles of nobility and of the arms and honours pertaining to them. On the 16th April there was another ceremony in commemoration of the acceptance by the King of the new Constitution, and an amnesty was declared for all guilty of violation of laws in connection with the revolutionary movement. Again on the 14th July the citizens of Pondicherry celebrated the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille and the regeneration of the French Nation. They took an oath of loyalty to the Constitution, and there followed a military review and a grand patriotic feast.

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[1] P. A. mss. 1440, 1443, 1445, 1457.

[2] *Ibid.*, mss. 1462-1464.

[3] *Ibid.*, mss. 1475-1477.

[4] *Ibid.*, ms. 1453.

The first constructive work of the Colonial Assembly was the drawing up on the 3rd August 1791 of 29 articles to serve as the basis of a new constitution for the French settlements in India. The constitution was practically the same as that drawn up by the General Assembly on the 5th July. One interesting feature was that the Colonial Assembly had to include four representatives of the Indian inhabitants when it discussed any matter concerning them. The Assembly was to be re-elected in full every two years. It was to meet once a week, on Thursdays, and its sittings were to be held in public.[1] The next work of the Colonial Assembly was the re-organisation of the Municipality on the 3rd September, electing the popular Comte de Civrac as Mayor and reducing the number of members to four.[2] It also elected two deputies from India for the new Legislative Assembly in Paris, choosing for the purpose Moracin, who had returned to France at the end of 1790, and a Bordeaux merchant named Corbin, who had taken a leading part in the agitation for the abolition of the monopoly privilege of the Company of Calonne. In September 1792 the Colonial Assembly tried to impose the Civil Constitution of the Clergy on the priests, with the result that only two Capuchins and two Jesuits accepted it while the rest left Pondicherry and took refuge at Madras.[3]

VIII. *Arrival of two Civil Commissioners from France: administrative and other reforms (September 1792—May 1793).*

In France the Revolution had created a new interest in the Indian possessions. In October 1791 the National Assembly took a decision to send 600 infantry and 140 artillery troops to Pondicherry, with the eventual plan of increasing the garrison of that colony to 1,000 European troops, 1,000 sepoys and two artillery companies.[4] It was not, however, till September 1792 that additional troops, numbering less than 400, actually arrived at Pondicherry. There also arrived at the same time an engineer, de Phélines, charged with the construction of fortifications at Pondicherry.[1] In January 1792 the National Assembly also decided to send four Civil Commissioners to supervise the new organisation of the Eastern colonies. In February they started for the Isle of France, from where two of them, Lescallier and Dumorier, were to proceed to India.[2] In July the Civil Commissioners arrived in the Isle of France, where a month before Malartic had succeeded Cossigny as Governor-General.[3] The news of the coming of two Civil Commissioners on behalf of the National Assembly was enthusiastically welcomed by the citizens of Pondicherry, and the Colonial Assembly looked forward to seeing its work of re-organising the administration of the French settlements in India being placed on a solid legal footing with the recognition of the National Assembly. As it actually turned out, the Civil Commissioners introduced a more sober and moderate note in the revolutionary zeal of the citizens. Lescallier was the first to arrive at Pondicherry on the 30th September, Dumorier remaining in the Isle of France for a few months more to complete his work there.[4]

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[1] P. A. ms. 1454 (Constitutional Decree of the Colonial Assembly).

[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 1481.

[3] For details about the work of the Colonial Assembly see Registers 51-54 (*Inventaire des Anciennes Archives de l'Inde Française, Pondichéry*).

[4] P. A. ms, 1505.

At Pondicherry Lescallier was accorded a warm reception. He was a man with previous experience of colonial administration, having been *Ordonnateur* for some time at St. Domingo. The first thing he advised was the election of a new Colonial Assembly on regular lines, prescribed by law and in conformity with the provisions of the French Constitution of 1791. The new Assembly was to consist of 12 members, with an equal number of supplementary members. They were to be elected only by active citizens. The qualifications required to become an active citizen were: to be born French or to become a French citizen in conformity with the French Constitution of 1791; to be at least 25 years of age; to own property worth 500 rupees and to reside in the colony for at least one year, or to pay a rent of 5 rupees per month with a minimum period of two years' residence. The list of active citizens at Pondicherry drawn up in November 1792 included only 214 names. They were followed by the names of 14 Topasses or men of mixed Portuguese-Indian origin, who were also made eligible as electors on the following conditions: being legitimately born of free parents; owning property worth 500 rupees or paying a rent of 5 rupees per month; and being able to read and speak French.[1]

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[1] P. A. ms. 1834.

[2] *Ibid.*, mss. 1575, 1628, 1633, 1650.

[3] *Ibid.*, mss. 1798, 1564.

[4] *Ibid.*, ms. 1845, 1848.

A new Colonial Assembly was elected on the basis of these provisions in December 1792. It was the fourth and the last Assembly. Leaving to this body the task of drawing up a scheme of re-organisation of all the French settlements in India, Lescallier took in hand a number of reforms in the military, economic and religious spheres. One interesting measure of reform was the prohibition of slave-trade in pursuance of the King's instructions to the Civil Commissioners dated 22nd February 1792.[2] With the help of the engineer, de Phélines, who had arrived in September, the debris of the old fort were cleared and the construction of the canal through the town continued. There was a new survey of the villages belonging to Pondicherry, and huts were built for the homeless pariahs.

The assumption of virtually all governmental functions by Lescallier relegated de Fresne, the Governor, to a secondary position. The latter, disgusted at his diminished importance in the colony where he had been mainly responsible for the preservation of peace and order, and tired of the acrimonious correspondence he had to carry on with the Governor-General, Conway, Cossigny and Malartic in succession, over Chandernagore affairs, finally returned to France towards the end of January 1793, handing over charge to Touffreville, Commandant at Karikal.[3] In February arrived Chermont, appointed by Malartic as Governor of Pondicherry, and with him also came Dumorier, the other Civil Commissioner destined for India.

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[1] The list of citizens is to be found in P. A. ms. 1903. For details of the re-organisation and the work of the new Colonial Assembly see P. A. Registers 57-58 (*Inventaire des Anciennes Archives de l'Inde Française, Pondichéry*).

[2] P. A. mss. 1633, 1861.

[3] *Ibid.*, ms. 1909 (dispute between de Fresne and Lescallier) and ms. 1951 (departure of de Fresne from Pondicherry).

At the end of March the citizens of Pondicherry received with amazement the news of the startling course of events in France,—the treachery of the King, his suspension from office, the proclamation of a Republic, and the glory of Valmy. They were seized with a delirium of partiotic and revolutionary exuberance, and on April 1 and 2 celebrated the dawn of a new era, with planting the tree of Liberty, illuminations, feasts and cries of "*Vive la Nation*", "*Vive la Republique*".[1] All the old forms and usages were discarded as Pondicherry passed suddenly from the year 1793 to the second year of the Republic. The Revolutionary Calendar and even the Revolutionary method of salutation, with the hand being placed on the heart, were adopted all at once. Shortly after, the Colonial Assembly decreed the formation of a National Guard. The delirium of revolutionary exuberance was, however, rudely shaken when towards the end of May alarming news began to reach Pondicherry about the outbreak of war between France and England. It suddenly woke up the revolutionaries to the danger in which they stood in the defenceless condition of Pondicherry. The Colonial Assembly meeting on the 26th decided to put off all pending business and to concentrate entirely on measures of defence in apprehension of an immediate attack.

IX. *The last English attack and capitulation of Pondicherry.*

At the beginning of June, Chermont received definite information that the English were preparing to march against Pondicherry. On the 7th he called a council of war, consisting of the two Civil Commissioners, two representatives of the Colonial Assembly, the *Ordonnateur,* the Mayor and the Commander of the National Guard. Hasty preparations were started to improve the defences of the town and to bring in provisions in anticipation of a siege. It was, however, an impossible task to hold out long against a serious attack. The fortifications were in ruins and nothing had been done since 1785 to reconstruct them. All that the engineer, de Phélines, could do in the course of a month and a half was to improvise filling up the gaps at some places. The garrison consisted of 490 men belonging to the regiment of Pondicherry, 80 belonging to the artillery, and 400 sepoys. It was augmented by 150 men of the National Guard, whose ardent patriotism could not unfortunately make up for their total lack of military experience, a company of Dragons of 25 men, newly raised specially for reconnoitring work, an artillery company of 50 men recruited from sailors, another company of 50 recruited from Topasses, and 450 sepoys newly levied. The artillery consisted of 140 pieces in all, of which only 11 were of sufficiently long-distance calibre. There was a large stock of powder, but kept in such an exposed condition as to constitute a source of danger to the town in case of an enemy bombardment. The munitions sent from the Isle of France were inadequate for a prolonged siege, and the shells were for the most part of different calibres from the guns used. There were sufficient provisions to last for three months, but the funds in the treasury were hardly adequate to meet the expenses for more than a month. Frantic efforts were made to replenish the treasury. The patriotic zeal of the citizens succeeded in raising a considerable sum of money from voluntary contributions, and many of the Indian farmers of lands willingly advanced money to organise defence.[1]

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[1] P. A. mss. 2021, 2023, 2025.

Preparations of other kinds also were made. In order to release every available person for military work the Municipal organisation practically suspended its functions, and the Colonial Assembly delegated its authority to a temporary commission of three. Women and children were sent out to Tranquebar for safe shelter. To prevent treachery, the Colonial Assembly passed a decree on the 20th June prohibiting anybody from going out without the special permission of the Governor.[2]

[1] Details of military preparations made are contained in P. A. mss. 2124, 2164 (reports of the representatives of the Colonial Assembly in the Council of War) and ms. 2195 (report by the Governor, Chermont, after the fall of Pondicherry).

[2] P. A. ms. 2122.

On the 12th July the English army came within sight of Pondicherry and encamped on the heights of Perimbé. On the 15th three English ships anchored before the place to complete its encirclement. The army consisted of 24,000 men, including 6,000 Europeans, and had a powerful artillery. The English had thus an overwhelming superiority in men and guns, and such was the exposed condition of Pondicherry that the town could have been taken by a daring surprise attack. But the memory of the heroic resistance offered by Pondicherry on several occasions in the past made the English unduly cautious and induced them to lay a regular siege. On the same day that the English army encamped at Perimbé, Chermont issued a proclamation declaring Pondicherry to be in a state of siege.[1] Although he had no illusion about the precarious position of the settlement, his patriotic spirit and the enthusiasm of the citizens inspired by the news of the victory of Valmy induced him to put up as good a show of resistance as was possible under the circumstances. There was no hope of getting assistance from any of the Indian Princes. Chermont made vain appeals to Tipu and Nizam Ali for intervention, but neither of them even sent a reply. He wrote frantic letters to de Vigie and Raymond, commanding European contingents in the Mysore and Hyderabad armies, to induce their masters to send assistance to Pondicherry. But he was equally disappointed, since neither Tipu, who had received no help from the French in his recent war with the English, nor Nizam Ali was prepared to embroil himself with the English for the sake of a Power which had abandoned all pretensions to political importance in India and seemed destined to disappear altogether.[2] It was the logical result of the policy followed by the French Government with regard to Indian possessions since the conclusion of peace in 1783.

Even the last hope of external help, some reinforcements from the Isle of France, was dashed to the ground by the end of July. On the 27th Chermont read before the war council letters from the Governor-General Malartic and Vice-Admiral de Saint-Felix, which had been brought by a frigate, the *Cybèle*.[1] The frigate could come only up to Tranquebar, from where the letters were sent to Pondicherry by land. In place of the expected news of reinforcements, Pondicherry received a mere questionnaire as to how far the English in India were in a position to send an expedition against the Isle of France. The members of the war council were sadly disappointed at the neglect by the mother country and the indifference of the chiefs of the Isle of France. From a letter written after the fall of Pondicherry by the President of the interim Committee to which the Colonial Assembly had delegated its authority, it appears that the responsibility for leaving Pondicherry to its fate belonged entirely to the Revolutionary Government of Paris and not to the chiefs of the Isle of France.[2]

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[1] P. A. ms. 2153.

[2] *Ibid*, ms. 2140 (Chermont to de Vigie, commanding French contingent in the service of Tipu, 4th July 1793) and ms. 2195 (Chermont's report on the fall of Pondicherry).

In spite of the failure of the last hope of getting any external help, the war council remained fixed in its determination to defend the place to the last. This strong attitude did not deceive the English, who undoubtedly came to know about the mission of the *Cybèle*. At the beginning of August both General Braithwaite, commanding the English army, and Cornwallis, commanding the fleet, summoned Pondicherry to surrender, to which Chermont gave a heroic and dignified reply expressing his determination to resist. At a meeting of the Colonial Assembly held on the 3rd August Chermont's reply was acclaimed with cheers, and the citizens of Pondicherry set themselves to defend the town at all costs. Upon the refusal to surrender, the English opened bombardment of the place and advanced closer. De Phélines once suggested a sortie, but in view of the overwhelming numerical superiority of the investing army the suggestion was considered inadvisable. The English bombardment soon created a havoc, putting out of action all the long-range guns of the French and destroying a large number of houses. The English attacked not merely with guns but also with propaganda. They dropped into the town a large number of leaflets, bearing the portrait of Louis XVI and the inscription, "I die innocent". Journals giving news of the beheading of the King, the treachery of Dumouriez and the civil war in the south and west of France were also thrown into the town to create dissension among the citizens.

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[1] P. A. ms. 2164.

[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 2190.

The enemy propaganda had its effect, but even more decisive was the military situation which rendered further resistance absolutely fruitless. On the 20th August Chermont called a meeting of the war council in which he advised immediate capitulation in order to avoid further destruction of the town. Two days later the Colonial Assembly and the Municipality also came round to the same opinion and authorised Chermont to open negotiations with the English. Chermont entrusted the task of negotiation to Touffreville, and after only a few hours' discussion the terms of capitulation were drawn up and signed on the 23rd. The terms were as honourable as the French could expect under the circumstances. Pondicherry was to be handed over to the English, who gave an assurance to respect the personal liberty of the citizens and their rights of property. The soldiers were to surrender their arms and standards and were to be taken to Madras, from where they would be sent back to Europe.[1]

X. *Pondicherry after capitulation.*

So abrupt was the development of events that the three-member Commission authorised by the Colonial Assembly to draw up a new constitution for the French settlements in India was in total ignorance of the capitulation till the last. The members were quietly deliberating on the clauses of the constitution, when the entry of the English troops into the town woke them up for the first time to the reality of the situation. The capitulation of Pondicherry was followed by a counter-revolution, and many of the officers and citizens threw up the tri-colour cockade and wore signs of mourning for the King. The English authorities gave permission to all French citizens to leave the town and go wherever they liked. Only a few took advantage of this permission and left for the Isle of France, while the rest continued to live at Pondicherry, doubtless because of the uncertainty of the political situation in France. According to an English census taken in 1796 there were 823 Europeans in the town, including women and children.[1]

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[1] On the siege and fall of Pondicherry there is a detailed *mémoire* by Chermont (P. A. ms. 2195), which was drawn up to defend his conduct against unfavourable comments made by his opponents, including Lescallier. For the terms of capitulation see Labernadie—*La Revolution et les Etablissements Français dans l'Inde,* pp. 160-162.

Pondicherry was administered successively by General Braithwaite and Col. McLeod, and except for petty vexations like billetting of officers in private houses and occasional arrests of suspected persons, there was nothing to disturb the normal life of the place. The most sensational incident during the period of English occupation was in 1799, when on a suspicion that some people were plotting to leave Pondicherry and join Tipu in his war with the English, there was a thorough search of all the private houses and a large number of Frenchmen, including some of the most prominent citizens, were arrested and thrown into prison.[2]

Lescallier, one of the Civil Commissioners, taking advantage of the permission granted by the English, left Pondicherry in November 1793 for the Isle of France, from where in October 1794 he sent a detailed report to the National Convention in France on the events at Pondicherry leading up to the capitulation, and on the means to be adopted by France to destroy English power in India in co-operation with some of the country Powers.[3] Chermont continued to live at Pondicherry till his death in 1798. In order to clear himself of the charge of cowardice and pusillanimity in agreeing to capitulate, he wrote a long and detailed *mémoire* on the siege and fall of Pondicherry.[4] He attributed the fall of Pondicherry not merely to the lack of fortifications and adequate troops, but also to the spirit of indiscipline and insubordination in the army engendered by the revolutionary movement, and the dissension between the civil and military authorities created by the arrival of the two Civil Commissioners from France. He had from the beginning of his office as Governor realised the consequences of the state of affairs, and had warned the Minister of Marine that Pondicherry could not be defended in a war with the English. In April he had even asked for permission from the Governor-General to retire. His personal opinion was to evacuate all troops and munitions from Pondicherry, since defence was absolutely out of the question, but popular opinion, intoxicated with the news of the successes of the Republican arms in Europe, was vehemently opposed to it. He yielded to the wishes of the citizens in deciding to defend Pondicherry, only hoping that opinion might change, enabling him to end a meaningless resistance.[1]

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[1] Labernadie—*Le Vieux Pondichéry*, p. 408.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 409.

[3] P. A. ms. 2200.

[4] *Ibid.*, ms. 2195.

The fall of Pondicherry in August 1793 practically closed the long chapter of Anglo-French rivalry in India, which had begun since the time of Dupleix about half a century earlier. For the next twenty-three years the capital of French India remained under English occupation, and when it was finally restored in December 1816, the French came back under entirely changed circumstances. By the treaties of 1814 and 1815 France definitely recognised English sovereignty in India, and received back her old possessions on the clear stipulations that she was not to erect any fortifications in any of the settlements and not to maintain troops beyond the requirement of police duties. Thus Pondicherry in 1816 was entirely different from what it was before the capitulation of 1793, the centre of French rivalry to the expansion of English power in India, and from the historical point of view it ceased to have any special significance.

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[1] Chermont expressed the same opinion in a letter to Larcher at Mahé, dated 27th November 1793, P. A. ms. 2194.

CHAPTER XVII

OTHER FRENCH SETTLEMENTS (1785-1793)

CHANDERNAGORE

I. *Conditions during 1785-89.*

The history of Chandernagore after restitution, like that of Pondicherry, falls into two clearly marked divisions,—a period of administrative reforms from 1785 to 1789, followed by a period of revolution from 1789 to 1793. Also as in the case of Pondicherry, the revolution came as the result of the policies and actions of the administration in the first period, which, however honest in intentions, caused widespread discontent among the citizens. There was this difference, however, that while at Pondicherry the revolution was kept within proper limits, thanks to the tact of the Governor and the sobriety and moderation of the popular leaders, at Chandernagore the movement, being dominated by a few selfish men, soon degenerated into chaos and anarchy, which continued till the capture of the place by the English in 1793.

Chandernagore and the five subordinate factories at Patna, Kasimbazar, Dacca, Jougdia and Balasore were restored to the French early in 1785. Dangereux, who had been sent to Bengal in 1784 to look after French commercial interests there, was appointed as the first *Commandant*. Although Chandernagore had completely lost its political importance as a result of the consolidation of the English power in Bengal, it had nevertheless great commercial promise. The newly established Company of Calonne took in hand an ambitious programme of developing the lucrative Bengal trade, taking advantage of Article 13 of the Treaty of Versailles (1783), which guaranteed to the French all their old trading rights and privileges. But, as we have noticed already, for two years the English put every obstacle in the way. Naturally anxious to monopolise all the trade of Bengal, they put their own interpretation on Article 13 of the treaty, severely restricting French commercial activities. They established a monopoly over the trade in salt, opium and saltpetre, used their political power to obstruct French purchases in Bengal, and arrogated to themselves the right of inspecting every foreign ship in the Hooghly. Numerous conflicts arose between the two nations, which did not cease till after the conclusion of a separate Commercial Convention in 1787.

Dangereux was replaced in October 1787 by Mottet. His period of administration had achieved little in reviving French trade and commerce in Bengal, the principal task entrusted to him. Nor was Mottet, who remained as Commandant till the end of 1788, more successful in this respect. Mottet was succeeded by Montigny, who, it will be remembered, was till then the French Resident at the Court of Poona. Montigny's appointment as Commandant at Chandernagore was due to the recommendation of Conway, Governor of Pondicherry, who had been impressed by his tact and ability, and considered him as the most suitable person to take charge of the French settlement in Bengal, then in a very miserable condition. Taking up the reins of administration at Chandernagore, Montigny applied himself to three tasks,—reviving French trade and commerce in Bengal, effecting administrative reforms, and augmenting revenues. As a diplomatic agent he had given proof of his skill and ability, but as an administrator he proved far less competent. Although honest and well-meaning, he was hasty and overzealous. In trying to execute his programme of reforms all at once, he rode roughshod over the opposition of the vested interests and naturally created a large number of enemies. In fact, it was his policy which was largely responsible for the outbreak of the revolution in 1790.

When Montigny first took charge of Chandernagore at the end of 1788, the settlement was in a poor state. There is a vivid contemporary account left by a French military officer named Yvon who visited the place in 1789[1]. The French inhabitants, accustomed to depend on English doles during the period of occupation, were much too sunk in sloth and idleness to take any initiative in trade and commerce. Most of the houses were in ruins, and the few good ones were owned by foreigners, principally English. The town, which had been practically built by Dupleix and had once enjoyed political importance and commercial prosperity, wore a deserted appearance.

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[1] He was the same person who, as will be noticed later, was sent to Chandernagore in 1791 as a Conciliation Commissioner. His account of Chandernagore in 1789, *Notes sur le Bengale,* is a lengthy document of more than 100 pages,—P. A. ms. 1142. It has been summarised by M. Bardet in an article "Chandernagore in 1789" published in the "*Revue Historique de l'Inde Française*", Vol. IV, Pt. II.

In spite of this poor state, however, Chandernagore still constituted the economic centre of the French establishments in India. Territorial revenues constituted a small part of their total income, the major portion coming from the sale in Bengal of salt and opium. The Commercial Convention of 1787 allotted to the French in Bengal 300 chests of opium, which were sold by auction in Calcutta and brought a substantial income to the Public treasury. Before Montigny's time the trade in opium was in private hands, but he made it a State monopoly, which brought a profit of twelve to fifteen hundred thousand livres annually. The other important branch of trade was salt. The Convention of 1787 allowed the French to import into Bengal 200,000 maunds of salt, which were bought by the English in Calcutta at a fixed price, 120 rupees for 100 maunds. It was made a State monopoly and permits were sold, at the rate of 20 rupees for 120 maunds, to private merchants to import salt into Bengal. These permits were distributed among the various French settlements in India on the basis of the number of European population in each. There was an office, first at Chandernagore and later transferred to Calcutta, entrusted with the delivery of the imported salt to the English. The latter did not pay cash to individual merchants, but made over the entire price to the Government of Chandernagore, which in its turn distributed the amount among the permit-holders, after deducting 7½% for meeting establishment charges and for providing relief to the poor in the various settlements. "Thus the sale of permits of salt was a resource for the State, the sale of salt brought an income to private persons, and in addition the percentage deducted from the total sale proceeds augmented a fund for the relief of the poor."[1] The trade in salt was the only considerable source of income for the French settlements in India, and since Chandernagore was the centre of this trade the role of the Commandant there was more commercial than political.

II. *The Administration of Montigny.*

Montigny set his mind to the task of restoring economic prosperity and carrying out administrative reforms. The establishment of a State monopoly over the sale of opium produced an increased revenue, and the system of granting permits for the importation of salt was beneficial to both the State as well as private persons. Montigny cut down unnecessary expenses, increased grant to the hospital, and introduced a French pilot service for guiding vessels from the mouth of the Hooghly. About the early period of his administration we have a report by Montigny himself, "The Present State of the French Settlements in Bengal", dated 29th May 1789.[2] Montigny's zeal for reform was his undoing and raised for him a host of enemies. He was denounced by vested interests as a despot, "whose long residence at the Court of the Marathas had accustomed him to all the manœuvres of an abject policy", and who "believed that he could employ the same means for administering Chandernagore."[3] Certain it is that Montigny proved less tactful at Chandernagore than at Poona. With more prudence and foresight he might have been able to leave a peaceful administration in Bengal. As it was, he found fault with most of the higher officers and dismissed them one after another. He was emboldened in this course by the support he received from his patron, Conway, who had been appointed Governor-General in October 1789.

Mottet, the ex-Commandant, had continued to remain at Chandernagore as *Ordonnateur* and President of the Provincial Tribunal. Montigny obtained an order from Conway for Mottet's return to Pondicherry. He then suppressed the office of *Ordonnateur* and assumed the powers of the President of the Tribunal himself. He dismissed the three Assessors of the Tribunal, de Verinnes, Auvernais and Tinglet de Neuville, and filled their places with men of his own choice. Having thus gained complete control over the Tribunal, he turned against Richemont, the *Procureur,* and Mercier (formerly secretary of de Suffren), the Registrar of the Court. They were accused of grave financial irregularities, and Montigny obtained orders from Conway for their dismissal. Mercier fled away from Chandernagore with the public funds left in his custody. Richemont, who was to continue in office till the appointment of a successor by Conway, was accused of complicity in Mercier's escape, brought for trial before the Tribunal and suspended from office, which was then given to one of the partisans of Montigny, de Bretel, pending the arrival of a permanent incumbent. Montigny next turned to the Tribunal for Indians and drove out de Verinnes from the office of *Zamindar* or President. The latter was compelled to resign, after accusations of grave irregularities had been brought against him. In a word, Montigny in his zeal for reform moved too far and too fast, and soon there was ranged against him the major part of the population of Chandernagore.[1]

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[1] Labernadie—*La Revolution et les Etablissements Français dans l'Inde*, p. 207.

[2] P. A. ms. 2690.

[3] *Ibid*, ms. 2712 (*Griefs des Citoyens*, drawn up by the Revolutionary elements at Chandernagore, 19th June 1790).

Added to this were two other sources of trouble,—first, the administrative anomaly about the relationship between Chandernagore and Pondicherry, and second, the outbreak of revolution at Pondicherry. The relationship between Pondicherry and Chandernagore was not quite clear. Although Chandernagore was under the supervision of Pondicherry, there was no effective controlling authority in the latter, and the Commandant of Chandernagore was directly dependent on the Governor-General in the Isle of France. Since Montigny was the nominee of Conway, the Governor-General, having replaced Mottet, a relation of de Fresne, Governor of Pondicherry, and since he showed little deference to the Pondicherry Government, being assured of Conway's support, he was disliked by the Governor and the *Conseil Supérieur* at Pondicherry. Secondly, the arrival of the *Bienvenue* in February 1790, with the news of the Revolution in France, was followed by an upheaval at Pondicherry, where the people in imitation of their brothers of the Metropolis set up a General Assembly of citizens and a National Committee to control the authority of the Governor. There was an exuberance of the spirit of liberty and democracy, and people scented tyranny everywhere. In the crusading temper of the General Assembly Montigny appeared to be a veritable despot, trampling over the rights and liberties of the citizens of Chandernagore.

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[1] For a list of the charges against Montigny see *Griefs des Citoyens,* P. A. ms. 2712.

After being suspended from office by the *Conseil Provincial* at Chandernagore, Richemont went to Pondicherry early in 1790 and took his case to the *Conseil Supérieur.* This latter body, of which the members were not well-disposed towards Montigny, annulled the judgment of the *Conseil Provincial* and ordered for his restoration to the office of *Procureur.* Richemont also took his case before the General Assembly of citizens, where he was hailed as a martyr to the cause of liberty, and his complaints against Montigny were included in the list of grievances to be placed before the National Assembly in Paris.

III. *Beginning of the Revolution.*

Richemont felt fully avenged and returned to Chandernagore on the 28th April 1790. By the same boat by which he travelled there came from the Isle of France Villau des Rabines, the new *Procureur* appointed by Conway. The arrival of Richemont started a general conflagration, helped by the tactlessness and indecision of Montigny. Finding that his title to the office of *Procureur,* derived from the decision of the *Conseil Supérieur,* was of no avail, when a new incumbent had been appointed by the Governor-General, Richemont tried to gain his ends by means of a popular revolt such as he had just witnessed at Pondicherry. On the 30th April he called a meeting of his adherents, giving it the name of General Assembly of citizens, although it was attended by only 43 persons. The issues placed before it were a curious mixture of the personal grievances of Richemont and the interests of the citizens in general. A petition was drawn up, requesting the *Conseil Provincial* to declare the appointment of the new

Procureur invalid. It was followed by further preparations for a popular revolt. Cockades of Liberty were distributed and fresh invitations were issued to citizens to meet on the 3rd May to deliberate about the "welfare and tranquility of the colony."

The General Assembly met on the morning of the 3rd. It was intended to put pressure on the *Conseil Provincial*, scheduled to meet a few hours later on the same day. The Assembly elected de Verinnes as President and Tinglet de Neuville as Secretary, both of them victims of Montigny's high-handedness. A small committee was also elected, and Richemont found a place in it by unanimous voice. The meeting began with the taking of oath to "the Nation, the Law and the King". Even Frimont, the commander of the army, and other military officers present took the oath. Richemont then rose to narrate the revolution at Pondicherry, and easily roused the selfish instincts of the citizens of Chandernagore to the cause of revolt by promising that they could procure from the National Assembly in Paris the entire benefit accruing from the sale of opium and saltpetre, without having to share it with the citizens of other French settlements. While the Assembly was in session, a small deputation went to the *Conseil Provincial* with the petition of the 30th April. The petition was summarily rejected, whereupon the Assembly declared the *Conseil* dissolved and elected a new one in its place, in which Richemont was restored to his old post of *Procureur*. The people then went in a procession, occupied the Council House and installed the new Tribunal.

The revolution was in motion, and a summons was sent to Montigny to appear before the Assembly, take the oath of loyalty to the Nation, and recognise the legality of the new order. At his own request he was given twenty-four hours to think over the matter. The Assembly met again on the 4th May to receive the reply of Montigny. The latter, intimidated by the strength of the opposition, vacillated and tried to gain time by feigning illness. The Assembly sent a deputation with a peremptory summons to Montigny to appear in person and give his reply without delay. Montigny yielded and appeared before the Assembly, where he was presented with four demands: to recognise the legality of the Assembly, to approve all its past and future actions, to place the troops under its control, and to treat with foreign Powers in conformity with its wishes. Montigny wanted further time, which was brusquely refused. He hesitated for a time and then offered full submission, accepting all the demands and taking the oath of loyalty to the Nation. There was at once a change in the atmosphere. Montigny was hailed as a patriotic leader, and the Assembly burst into shouts of "Long live the Nation, long live Montigny."[1]

There was an apparent reconciliation, and if Montigny had the tact and prudence of de Fresne, Governor of Pondicherry, he could have kept the balance even between himself and the Assembly. But that was not to be. Montigny had no intention of keeping his promise to the Assembly, and soon petty conflicts arose between him and the Committee appointed by the Assembly. The climax came on the 9th May, when the Committee made a demand that Montigny should inform the foreign Powers about the change in the administration of the colony. Montigny wavered and took time, but when the Committee met again on the 11th and pressed its demand, he flatly refused to recognise the legality of the Assembly and its Committee. This open defiance on the part of Montigny necessitated the calling of the Assembly on the 14th.[2] But Montigny's courage failed him, and on the 13th evening he fled away secretly to Chinsurah with his family. When the Assembly met on the 14th the members learnt with surprise about his escape. Frimont, the commander of the troops, declared that Montigny had left a letter for him, stating that he was going to Chinsurah for a few days and asking him to maintain order in the colony. In the absence of the intended victim the only course left for the indignant Assembly was to vote for his dismissal, and Frimont was called upon to assume the functions of the Commandant. Frimont, a prudent man, declared that he could not accept the office from the hands of the Assembly, but he agreed to be in charge of the troops to maintain order in the colony under the direction of the

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[1] For the beginning of the revolution at Chandernagore see P. A. ms. 2698—Proceedings of the meetings of the General Assembly of citizens from 30th April to 14th May 1790.

[2] *Ibid*, ms. 2697—Extract from the Deliberations of the National Committee of citizens, 9th May, 1790.

Assembly. The proposal was accepted and the Assembly entrusted its own Committee with the functions of the Commandant, pending the arrival of a new incumbent.[1]

IV. *The course of the Revolution* (*May to October 1790*).

The Revolution had triumphed, but there soon broke out differences of opinion leading to large-scale desertions. As the administration passed into the hands of a clique moved by selfish interests and severely vindictive measures were taken against all those supposed to be adherents of Montigny, saner elements realised that they had been befooled by Richemont and others like him, and from the end of May most of them fled away to foreign settlements in order to escape from the new tyranny. The climax came when in June even the President of the Committee, de Verinnes, and a member, Deonna, resigned from their offices and soon after retired to Serampore, where Montigny had shifted from Chinsurah. There was a widespread alarm at Chandernagore that the French emigrés under the leadership of Montigny were planning to capture the colony by force.[2] It is true that Montigny was planning in that direction and had secured some help from the English of Calcutta. The Governor-General, Cornwallis, had declared that he would treat with nobody else but Montigny as the representative of the French nation in Bengal.[3] But many of the deserters from Chandernagore had no intention of joining Montigny. Anyway, in terror of an attack by the partisans of Montigny, the Committee at Chandernagore decided to arm all citizens as a defensive measure. This led to another piquant situation, the withdrawal of Frimont with his troops on the 24th June from Chandernagore to Goretty, the residence of the Commandant built by Chevalier. He was asked to explain his conduct and summoned to return to Chandernagore. Frimont replied that he had withdrawn to Goretty on his own initiative and not as an agent of Montigny. The withdrawal had been forced upon him by the action of the Committee in arming all citizens without consulting him, and that he did not recognise the authority of the Committee to summon him back to Chandernagore.[1] The Committee thereupon raised a volunteer militia and took all possible defensive measures against an attack by Montigny and his partisans.

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[1] P. A. ms. 2698—Proceedings of the meetings of the General Assembly of citizens.

[2] *Ibid*, ms. 2699—letter from the Citizens' Committee to Frimont, 23rd June, 1790.

[3] Labernadie—*La Revolution et les Etablissements Français dans l'Inde*, p. 224 (quoting the letters of Cornwallis to de Fresne and Conway).

During his exile at Serampore Montigny wrote to de Fresne, Governor of Pondicherry, narrating the events at Chandernagore and accusing the Pondicherry Government of complicity, through the encouragement given to Richemont.[2] On the other hand, the Assembly and the Committee at Chandernagore also wrote to Pondicherry, narrating events from their point of view. They sought the protection of the Pondicherry Government and wanted a new Commandant.[3] One thing became clear in this battle of recrimination, that Montigny must be removed from office if peace was to be restored at Chandernagore. The determination of the citizens of Chandernagore was clearly expressed in their letter to the Committee of citizens at Pondicherry dated 29th May: "Whatever may happen, we would rather perish than return to the chains of despotism. France will avenge our death."[4] It seems that much of the excesses of the revolution at Chandernagore could have been averted if the Pondicherry Government had been authorised to send another person to replace Montigny soon after his flight from Chandernagore. But because of administrative anomaly, the decision to remove Montigny from office had to be taken by the Governor-General, and it was not till July that Conway gave up his protégé under the pressure of the Assembly of Citizens of the Isle of France.[5]

Montigny, tired of his exile at Serampore and being encouraged by the withdrawal of Frimont to Goretty, moved to that place on the 30th July and installed himself in the old chateau of the Commandant. He had collected a small partisan army and had also obtained some pieces of cannon from the English. On his arrival at Goretty, Frimont withdrew and encamped outside the chateau, indicating that he had no intention of joining his former chief. Montigny set up the old administration at Goretty, and since the trade in salt was dependent on direct payment between the Calcutta Government and the Commandant of Chandernagore, he was able to stop the trade of his opponents, hoping thus to bring them back to their senses. On the other hand, the Committee at Chandernagore felt alarmed at Montigny's presence so close to the town and greatly concerned at the stoppage of the trade of the citizens.

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[1] P. A. ms. 2699—letters from the Citizens' Committee to Frimont and from Frimont to the Committee, both dated 24th June 1790.

[2] *Ibid,* mss. 2702, 2738 (letters dated 27th May and 24th August 1790).

[3] *Ibid,* mss. 2703, 2712, 2723, 2727, 2731, 2739 (letters dated 29th May, 19th June, 29th June, 1st July, 7th July, 6th September, 1790).

[4] *Ibid,* ms. 2703.

[5] *Ibid.,* ms. 2736.

The situation could not be allowed to continue long. On the 1st September news arrived at Chandernagore about the dismissal of Montigny by Conway under the pressure of the Assembly of the citizens in the Isle of France. There was great joy and excitement in the town, and the Committee decided to take the initiative and attack Goretty. The citizens' militia surrounded the chateau on the night of the 2nd September. Although Montigny had adequate forces to put up a stiff resistance, his dismissal by Conway had so overwhelmed him with grief that he surrendered himself without any opposition. Next morning Montigny and his partisans as well as Frimont and his troops were brought back to Chandernagore and kept in prison. An interesting incident followed. Cornwallis, a friend of Montigny, wanted to intervene to save him and his partisans from the tyranny of the Chandernagore Committee. A pretext for intervention was ready at hand. Goretty was separated from Chandernagore by a small strip of English territory, and on the ground that the Chandernagore Committee had violated English sovereignty by moving troops across this corridor without his previous consent, Cornwallis demanded the release of all prisoners captured at Goretty, and he tried to press his demand by surrounding the small colony with 2,000 troops. The Committee was adamant and declared that the least movement on the part of the English would be the signal for killing all the prisoners, whereupon the English troops were immediately withdrawn.[1]

Montigny was interrogated for several days, but he refused to answer the charges brought against him, not recognising the legality of the Committee.[2] The Committee finally decided, perhaps for fear of another English intervention, to send him to France for trial by the National Assembly. On the 1st October Montigny and some of his adherents were put on board a small armed boat, the *Chandernagor*, renamed the *Patriote*, to carry them to the mouth of the Hooghly, where a larger vessel was waiting to transport them to the Isle of France. On the 5th, while the boat was still in the Hooghly, an English officer, Major Appley, came on board and demanded the surrender of Montigny and his fellow prisoners. On the refusal of the captain, four English schooners attacked the French boat and compelled the surrender of the prisoners, who were then taken to Calcutta. Appley refused the boat to proceed further until satisfaction had been given by the Chandernagore Committee for the violation of the Treaty of Versailles in moving troops to Goretty without the permission of the English.[3] The Assembly of Citizens at Chandernagore sent a strong note of protest to Lord Cornwallis against his high-handed intervention in favour of Montigny and his partisans, to which no reply was given.[4]

Montigny lived in Calcutta for four months and had the satisfaction of seeing his successor, Mottet, meeting with no better luck at Chandernagore and forced to take refuge in Calcutta soon after his arrival. On the 10th February 1791 he left Calcutta, with a touching farewell message to his friends and adherents, assuring them that he would secure justice for all on his arrival in France.[1]

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[1] On the capture of Goretty and the attempt of the Calcutta Government to rescue the prisoners see P. A. ms. 2739 (letter from the Citizens' Committee at Chandernagore to the Citizens' Committee at Pondicherry, 6th September 1790) and Labernadie—*La Revolution et les Etablissements Français dans l'Inde*, pp. 227-230.

[2] P. A. ms. 2765.

[3] *Ibid*, ms. 2777.

[4] *Ibid*, ms. 2778; see also ms. 2779 for a detailed account of the dispute with the Calcutta Government after the capture of Goretty, leading to the attack on the *Chandernagor* (letter from the Citizens' Committee at Chandernagore to the Citizens' Committee at Pondicherry, 10th October 1790). C. R. O.—*The French in India* Series, Vol. XIII—Complaints against the conduct of the British Governments in India having been made by the inhabitants of Chandernagore and transmitted to Europe for the consideration of the French National Assembly.

V. *The Mission of Mottet.*

It has been noticed already that one of the principal difficulties in the way of a peaceful settlement at Chandernagore was the extreme unpopularity of Montigny and the inability of the Pondicherry Government to replace him by a more tactful officer without the sanction of the Governor-General. However, the recall of Montigny by Conway and its sequel made it possible for de Fresne, Governor of Pondicherry, to deal with the problem of pacifying Chandernagore. The task was made even easier for him by the appointment of Cossigny as Governor-General in August 1790.[2] The latter was mild and conciliatory in temperament, and while informing de Fresne of his assumption of office and of the appointment of de Canaple to succeed Montigny at Chandernagore, he stated that in all matters relating to the settlements in India he would depend on the advice of the Governor of Pondicherry, being the man on the spot.[3] Thus feeling that he would be allowed some freedom of action and fearing that it would take some time for de Canaple to reach Bengal, de Fresne decided to send a tactful and competent person immediately to pacify the troubles at Chandernagore. Moreover, the English Government in Calcutta had been pressing him to nominate an official representative in Bengal with whom it could deal about the question of opium and salt. As an interim arrangement, therefore, de

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[1] Labernadie—*La Revolution et les Etablissements Français dans l'Inde*, pp. 249-250. There is an anonymous *mémoire* in the Pondicherry Archives (ms. 2783), *La Revolution de Chandernagor ou relation des troubles qui ont lieu dans cette colonie en* 1790, giving a complete and impartial narration of the course of events at Chandernagore during the early part of the Revolution there.

[2] P. A. mss. 1279—Conway to de Fresne, 25th July, 1790.

[3] *Ibd.*, mss. 1296, 1297—Cossigny to de Fresne, September, 1790.

Fresne decided to send Mottet, who had previous experience of Chandernagore administration.

Mottet started from Pondicherry at the end of September 1790. According to his instructions, on arrival in Bengal he was to inform the Chandernagore Committee about the provisional nature of his appointment, pending the arrival of de Canaple. He was to consider himself more as a conciliator than as an administrator. The principal object of his mission was to re-establish ordered economy in the settlement, which had broken down completely since the Revolutionary Committee came into power. There was in fact much to be done in this sphere, as Mottet himself found on his arrival in Bengal. Trade and commerce had come to a standstill, hardly any vessel taking the risk of going up to Chandernagore for fear of pillage. Many of the private French merchants had fled away and taken refuge at foreign settlements like Chinsurah, Serampore and Calcutta. Indians also had emigrated in large numbers, and even those that remained had their goods transferred to safer custody in Calcutta. The Revolutionary Committee, regardless of the state of the treasury, indulged in an orgy of extravagance, spending in the course of 1790 nearly ten times the amount sanctioned under the old budget. Money for this extravagance was found by emptying the Government treasury and laying hands on the funds and goods of the Company.[1] Extortions were also made from the Bengali inhabitants of Chandernagore under the euphemistic name of 'forced loan'.

Mottet arrived at Chandernagore on the 5th November 1790 and was given a most humiliating reception. Immediately after his arrival he was led before the Committee "almost like a criminal", as he wrote to de Fresne, and was subjected to a critical interrogation for several days on the object of his mission. The Committee finally decided to accept him as the head of the executive, but reducing his authority almost to nil. Till the drawing up of a new constitution for Chandernagore, control over finance, police and justice was to remain in the hands of the Committee. Mottet was to have no relation with the Chiefs of the Danish and Dutch settlements in Bengal for the support they had given to Montigny, and from the

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[1] P. A. ms. 2781 (Protest of the Company's agents at Chandernagore).

English Government of Calcutta he was to demand reparation for the outrage committed on the ship, *Chandernagor.* He was bound to execute the laws promulgated by the Committee, and only as a matter of grace he was allowed to correspond with the Governor of Pondicherry. Mottet was unwilling to accept such humiliating conditions, but fearing personal danger from a flat refusal, he merely sought an excuse to get out of Chandernagore. On the plea of having to settle the question of opium and salt with the English Government, he left Chandernagore early in December and took up his residence in Calcutta, from where he sent a detailed report to de Fresne.[1]

In January 1791 there broke out dissensions among the members of the Revolutionary Committee at Chandernagore. Those who were opposed to the growing tyranny of Richemont were accused of plotting to overthrow the existing regime, and sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment.[2] Most of the prisoners succeeded in escaping from Chandernagore. Mottet realised that the only way to stop the lawlessness and anarchy at Chandernagore was to employ force, and he sought the permission of Cornwallis in Calcutta to move French troops through English territory. As a last attempt he sent an appeal to the Chandernagore Committee to bring it to reason, but, as could have been expected, the appeal was in vain. Shortly after, on the 12th February, the newly appointed Commandant, de Canaple, arrived in Calcutta. Mottet was only happy to transfer to him the thankless task of pacifying Chandernagore, and himself returned to Pondicherry.

VI. *The failure of the new Commandant, de Canaple.*

De Canaple had been Commandant at Mahé from November 1787 to April 1790, and we shall see later the wise and efficient manner in which he guided the affairs of the settlement before the outbreak of the revolutionary troubles there. Returning to the Isle of France with the intention of going back to Europe, he was appointed by Conway Commandant of Chandernagore in July 1790. He started from the Isle of France at the beginning of September 1790 with two sets of instructions, one from Conway and the other from his successor, Cossigny, both of which enjoined on him the adoption of mild and conciliatory methods. Arriving at Pondicherry in December, de Canaple asked for more detailed instructions from de Fresne. Accordingly, the latter gave him another set of instructions, sending at the same time a copy to the Chandernagore Committee, with an appeal to accept de Canaple with a good grace.[1]

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[1] About Mottet's mission in Bengal, full information is available in the collection of his correspondence during this period preserved in the Pondicherry Archives (ms. 1304). The collection also includes the instructions given to Mottet by de Fresne and the letters of de Fresne to the Chandernagore Committee,

[2] P. A. mss. 2784, 2786, 2791.

In his instructions de Fresne made provision for the contingency of the new Commandant not being acceptable to the Chandernagore Committee. He was in that case to take up his residence in Calcutta, get himself recognised by Cornwallis and the Chiefs of the other foreign settlements as the accredited representative of France in Bengal, and to occupy himself with the sale of opium and salt. De Fresne's apprehension turned out to be true. De Canaple arrived in Calcutta on the 12th February 1791, and from there he sent a letter to the Chandernagore Committee together with a copy of the instructions he had received from de Fresne, explaining that in view of Mottet's experience he had thought it prudent not to proceed straight to Chandernagore without getting some definite assurances from the Committee.[2] The Committee in reply expressed surprise that having pledged his loyalty to the Revolution, Canaple should be afraid to come to Chandernagore, and it also felt indignant that he should have brought instructions from the Governor of Pondicherry, whose authority the citizens of Chandernagore no longer recognised.[3] Canaple thereupon decided to remain in Calcutta, concerning himself with the sale of opium and salt. Towards the end of June he was struck with a mortal disease, to which he succumbed on the 5th

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[1] P. A. mss. 1330, 1331, 2782.

[2] *Ibid*, ms. 2787.

[3] *Ibid*, ms. 2788.

August.[1] After his death the English Government sealed up the office of the French administration in Calcutta, pending the arrival of a new Commandant.

While Canaple lay dying, the Chandernagore Committee secretly sent a deputation, consisting of Longchamp and Ricard, to the Assembly of the Isle of France to lay before that body its grievances against the Commandant. At the same time it addressed a fiery appeal to the Pondicherry garrison to revolt against the authority of de Fresnè and the reactionary Assembly of that place.[2] The appeal had only the effect of widening the rift between Pondicherry and Chandernagore, but the deputation to the Isle of France produced far-reaching results, one of which was an open breach between Pondicherry and the Isle of France, both adopting contradictory policies to pacify troubles at Chandernagore.

VII. *Conflict between Pondicherry and the Isle of France: Despatch of two rival Missions.*

The Assembly of the Isle of France had from the beginning of the troubles at Chandernagore supported the anti-Montigny revolutionary faction. As a result of the deputation of Longchamp and Ricard, it brought pressure on Cossigny to intervene in the affairs of Chandernagore, and in July 1791 the latter decided to recall de Canaple and to send two Conciliation Commissioners to Bengal, Gautier and Yvon. The news of this decision reached Pondicherry at the beginning of August. De Fresne took it as a personal rebuff. He communicated to the Pondicherry Assembly a full report on the Chandernagore situation, together with all the correspondence exchanged between him and the Governor-General on the subject.[3] On the 7th August the Pondicherry Assembly passed a resolution protesting against the intervention of the Isle of France in the affairs of Chandernagore by sending a Conciliation Commission. Emboldened by the fact that the National Assembly in Paris had accepted its deputies as the accredited representatives of French India, it claimed that Pondicherry was in no way subordinate to the Government of the Isle of France, and that it alone had full control over the other Indian settlements.[1] Finally, at the instance of the Assembly de Fresne decided to send its President, Fumeron, to Bengal, not as Commandant, for he had no power to make such an appointment, but simply as an "agent to look after the interests of the nation." Fumeron was to try to bring the Chandernagore Committee to reason and to induce the citizens to elect representatives to the new Colonial Assembly at Pondicherry, failing which he was to convoke a meeting of the emigrés to elect representatives for Chandernagore.[2]

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[1] P. A. ms. 2803.

[2] *Ibid.*, mss. 2800-2802.

[3] *Ibid.*, mss. 1443, 1445.

The Conciliation Commissioners from the Isle of France reached Chandernagore on the 10th September, and two days later Fumeron arrived in Calcutta. Both the Commissioners and Fumeron had the same objective, to restore order at Chandernagore; but their instructions were so entirely contradictory that no agreement was possible. Soon after their arrival in Bengal, Gautier and Yvon at Chandernagore and Fumeron in Calcutta entered into a lengthy correspondence, each side trying to convince the other of the reasonableness of its point of view.[3] The stand taken by the Conciliation Commissioners was that the citizens of Chandernagore should be left alone to set up the system of administration they liked, and that the Pondicherry Government had no right to assert its control over Chandernagore against the will of its citizens and contrary to the policy of the Government of the Isle of France, which alone was responsible for the administration of all the French settlements in the East. Secondly, since opium was an article of Bengal, Chandernagore alone had the right to enjoy the benefit from its sale, but as a matter of compromise it would be willing to sacrifice a small part of it for the other French settlements in India. Fumeron, on his side, denied the proposition that Pondicherry had no control over Chandernagore, and on the other hand claimed that the Government of the Isle of France had no right to interfere in the affairs of

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[1] P. A. ms. 1457—Deliberations of the Colonial Assembly, 7th August 1791.

[2] *Ibid.*, mss. 1462, 1463 (Instructions given to Fumeron by the Colonial Assembly).

[3] *Ibid.*, mss. 2815, 2817, 2819.

Chandernagore. Secondly, he declared that granting autonomy to Chandernagore under the existing circumstances would amount to perpetuating a tyrannical regime which had driven out all the respectable citizens from the settlement. Thirdly, on the question of opium he took his stand on a recent order of the Minister, allocating the income from the sale of that article to the general revenues of the French settlements in India, to be distributed by the Pondicherry Government. The controversy was finally put an end to by the decision of the Calcutta Government on the 5th October to recognise Fumeron as the official French representative in Bengal and to hand over to him the quantity of opium fixed by the Anglo-French Convention of 1787.[1] It was a signal victory for Fumeron and the Pondicherry Government, since deprived of the revenue from the sale of opium the autonomy of Chandernagore was untenable.

VIII. *The new Constitution and After.*

Not to be baffled by the English recognition given to Fumeron, the Conciliation Commissioners and the Revolutionary Committee at Chandernagore proceeded to draw up a new constitution for the settlement. A general assembly of the citizens was held for the purpose on the 17th October. It was not attended by the emigrés, who as a mark of protest convoked another assembly in Calcutta a few days later.[2] On the 6th November the General Assembly of Chandernagore drew up a new constitution, which was put into effect forthwith.[3] Only its broad features may be noticed here. Chandernagore was declared completely free from the control of Pondicherry. There was to be a representative of the King, but the real powers were vested in a General Assembly, consisting of all the active citizens, i.e. of 25 years of age or over and domiciled in the settlement. It was to elect an *Assemblée Administrative*, which was to meet only once in three months, and a smaller body, the *Directoire* which was to be in charge of the administration during the intervals of the meetings of the *Assemblée Administrative*. The General Assembly, which was to meet only once a year, was also to elect two judicial tribunals, one for Europeans and another for Indians. For the second tribunal also the judge was to be a Frenchman, but he was to be assisted by some Indian Assessors, to be elected by the Indian inhabitants. That was the only crumb of 'equality' and 'fraternity' thrown out to Indians.

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[1] P. A. mss. 2821 (Calcutta Council to Fumeron, 5th October 1791) and 2823 (Fumeron to de Fresne, 6th October).

[2] *Ibid*, mss. 2831, 2833, 2835, 2837.

[3] *Ibid*, ms. 2842—*Constitution Provisoire de la colonie de Chandernagor;* also Reg. 92, *Inventaire des Anciennes Archives de l'Inde Française,* Pondichéry; and Labernadie—*La Revolution et les Establissements Français dans l'Inde,* pp. 279-290.

After the introduction of the new constitution Gautier returned to the Isle of France in December, leaving Yvon as Commandant at Chandernagore. Shortly after Richemont also left for the same destination to plead the cause of the citizens of Chandernagore against the tyranny of the Pondicherry Government. His mission was successful, and he returned to Bengal in June 1792. In the meantime Cossigny sent a formal order to de Fresne to recall Fumeron at once and not to interfere further in the affairs of Chandernagore, pending the arrival of Civil Commissioners from France, who were expected shortly. It was a rebuff for de Fresne, but he had nevertheless to obey the order of the Governor-General. The departure of Fumeron from Bengal was delayed by a few months on account of the death of Yvon, and of the replacement of Cossigny by Malartic as Governor-General, which held out a hope that the Government of the Isle of France would give more discretion to the Pondicherry authorities in settling the affairs of Chandernagore. But that hope was also broken when Malartic wrote to de Fresne, asking him to recall Fumeron and to leave the affairs of Chandernagore in the same state in which they had remained during the time of Cossigny.[1] To crown the discomfiture of de Fresne, Malartic appointed Gautier as Commandant at Chandernagore. Gautier was not, however, destined to return to Bengal. He arrived at Pondicherry with Lescallier, one of the Civil Commissioners, and remained there till the capture of the place by the English. Fumeron left Calcutta in

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[1] P. A. ms. 1888—de Fresne to Malartic, 31st October 1792.

October 1792, and back at Pondicherry he resumed his place as President of the Colonial Assembly.

For six months more anarchy reigned at Chandernagore, and the emigrés in Calcutta continued to live in destitution and poverty. Finally, all discords and enmities among the French in Bengal were set at rest by the sudden arrest of all the emgrés in Calcutta and the capture of Chandernagore by the English on the 11th June 1793, following the arrival of news of the outbreak of war in Europe. There is no record to show what resistance was offered by the citizens of Chandernagore,—perhaps none at all.

MAHE

I. *Condition of the Settlement after restitution.*

Mahé was restored to the French on the 15th August 1785.[1] The place had suffered complete destruction at the hands of the English, in violation of the terms of capitulation of 1779. At the time of taking possession, Marin, who was appointed Commandant, wanted a detailed list of the damages caused during the period of occupation, but the English representatives refused to supply any.[2] On his own part he drew up a *mémoire* for the information of the Pondicherry Government on the pillage and destruction committed since the capitulation.[3] According to this report, in 1779 the English had ravaged the settlement in a systematic way, pulling down the Government House and removing all the materials to Tellicherry, and destroying even the church and private dwellings. In November 1780 they handed over the place to the ruler of Kadattanad, who pillaged it once again. Shortly after, Mahé was captured by the forces of Mysore, who then laid siege to the neighbouring English settlement of Tellicherry. In 1783 the tide turned again, the English drove out the Mysore troops and retook Mahé. For the third time the place was given up to plunder and devastation.

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[1] P. A. ms. 4540.

[2] *Ibid*, ms. 4541 (declaration by Marin).

[3] *Ibid*, ms. 4547.

Thus Mahé had suffered such thorough destruction that when the French retook possession in 1785 they had to start from the beginning in reconstructing their settlement from the ruins of the old. Yet, curiously enough, it was this place which the French Government had seriously proposed, after the end of the hostilities, to be turned into the principal establishment in India. We have already noticed the exchange of correspondence on this subject between Bussy and the Minister. Marin, who took possession of the settlement in August 1785, acted as Commandant till November 1787, when he was succeeded in that office by de Canaple, himself remaining as *Ordonnateur*. De Canaple remained in office till April 1790, when he returned to the Isle of France, being succeeded as Commandant by Le Tellier. During the first five years all the energies of the administration were taken up by the work of reconstruction. The task was stupendous, and both money and materials were lacking. The revenue of Mahé was insufficient even to meet the normal expenses of the settlement, and the acuteness of the financial difficulty is brought out clearly by the annual statements of income and expenditure and the correspondence on the subject between the authorities of Mahé and the principal settlement preserved in the Pondicherry Archives.[1] Some relief was obtained by taking a loan of twenty thousand rupees from the agents of the new Company, de Court and de Boyer, which was utilised for the more pressing needs of reconstruction,—building a new Government House, a powder magazine, a prison and a church.[2]

Nothing, however, could be done to put the place in a tolerable state of defence, even against raids of bandits from neighbouring territories. There was no money to construct a wall or to restore the old earthen ditch which surrounded the settlement. The garrison was hardly adequate even to maintain internal law and order. Besides a couple of European officers, it consisted of about forty sepoys and an equal number of *Thevars,* a low caste people of the locality.[1] The only time that the citizens of Mahé had some feeling of security was during the occasional visits of warships.[2] The Moplahs of the coast constituted a special source of danger, and they frequently took advantage of the exposed condition of the French settlement to carry on their raids of depredation with impunity. One such incident took place just before the arrival of de Canaple, when some Moplahs of Calicut seized the Nayar of Kurangod, a vassal of France, from his residence at Mahé guarded by a detachment of sepoys, and carried him off to Calicut where he was hanged by Tipu's orders on a charge of having dishonoured a Moplah woman.[3] About another Moplah incursion de Canaple wrote to Conway at Pondicherry in April 1789, when a band raided some villages belonging to the French, carried off twenty Hindu inhabitants, and converted them to the Islamic faith after the painful method of circumcision.[4] Nor were the Hindu Nayars of the neighbourhood less troublesome, and in his letters to Pondicherry de Canaple frequently complained of the vexations caused by them.

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[1] P. A. mss. 4535 (*Mémoire* of Menesse, giving an estimate of the expenses for the reconstruction of Mahé), 4543 (*Mémoire* of Marin), 4544, 4552, 4557, 4599, 4651 (annual statements of income and expenditure from 1785 to 1789).

[2] *Ibid*, mss. 4554, 4561.

Apart from the worries caused by the raids of bandits, the Commandant at Mahé had frequent troubles with the authorities of the neighbouring English settlement of Tellicherry, who adopted various methods to obstruct the trade of the French, and even occupied some territories transferred to them by the Nayar of Kurangod when he placed himself under their protection. Repeated protests against the English pretensions proved of no avail, and the Commandant of Mahé had tamely to submit to the situation, contenting himself with complaints to the Governor of Pondicherry. Nor were relations with Tipu, the nominal ally of France, any happier, and throughout his period of office de Canaple had to complain frequently about the vexations caused by Tipu's agents to the supply of goods and provisions to the French settlement. These agents often terrorised the people of the villages belonging to the French. Canaple wrote several times to Tipu, who assured him that orders had been sent to his agents not to give any trouble to the French. That, however, did not improve matters, and Canaple had to write to the Governor of Pondicherry to take up the question with Tipu. Conway also complained of the interception of goods and letters passing through Tipu's territory but failed to get any redress.[1] Far from stopping the vexatious activities of his agents, Tipu complained to Conway against the Commandant of Mahé and wanted his recall.[2] It is rather curious that such were the relations of Tipu with the French at the very time that he was sending an embassy to Paris.

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[1] P. A. mss. 4556, 4695 (strength of the garrison in December 1787 and October 1790).

[2] *Ibid.,* ms. 4597 (de Canaple to the Minister, 18th December 1788).

[3] *Ibid.,* ms. 4555 (de Canaple to Conway, 8th December 1787).

[4] *Ibid.,* ms. 4624.

One source of inconvenience for the French at Mahé was that the territories belonging to the settlement were not in one compact area. The settlement proper was small, about two miles in area. It had received some additional territory from the Nāyar of Kurangod, but situated at some distance. Before the last war Bellecombe, during his visit to Mahé, had secured for the French three villages from Haidar Ali, but they were not contiguous to the original settlement. When de Canaple first arrived at Mahé, he suggested to Conway to propose an exchange of territory with Tipu to make the French possessions more compact, which would free them to some extent from the vexations of Tipu's agents.[3] In 1789 Tipu himself made a proposal to Conway to exchange the three villages given by his father for some other territory with an equal revenue.[4] The proposal, however, did not materialise for lack of agreement about the location of the territory to be given in exchange.[5]

When de Canaple first arrived at Mahé, he was full of hopes about turning it into a prosperous settlement and a flourishing centre of trade. Writing to Conway on the 20th February 1788, he referred to the great commercial advantages of Mahé and pointed out that it could be turned into an important centre of trade not merely for the products of the Malabar Coast, mainly pepper, but also for those of the Arabian

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[1] P. A. mss. 881, 882, 901, 926, 4565, 4577, 4615, 4624.

[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 1138.

[3] *Ibid.*, ms. 4555.

[4] *Ibid.*, ms. 4634 (Tipu to Conway, May 20, 1789).

[5] *Ibid.*, ms. 1199 (Observations of de Canaple on Tipu's offer of exchange of territories).

Coast, specially gum-arabic and borax.[1] In 1789 he drew up another *mémoire* on the commercial possibilities of the place, but stated that they could not be realised unless France showed more interest in the development and security of the settlement than what she had done since 1765.[2] Two years of administration, however, convinced him that there was little prospect of his being able to develop Mahé into a prosperous settlement. When the French Government had decided to withdraw troops from Pondicherry as an economy measure, Mahé could expect little relief. In September 1789 de Canaple wrote to Conway, "For two years I have been a witness to the agony of this settlement; spare me from being a witness to the afflicting spectacle of her death". At his own request he was relieved of his office and permitted to return to Europe.[3] In April 1790 he left Mahé for the Isle of France.[4] His later career has been noticed already in connection with the history of Chandernagore.

II. *Le Tellier and the beginning of the Revolution.*

De Canaple was succeeded provisionally by Le Tellier, who had been in command of the sepoy force. In the detailed instructions he left for his successor, de Canaple particularly recommended a cautious and prudent policy towards the Nawab of Mysore, avoidance of traffic in arms which might give the English a cause of grievance, and maintenance of peace and order in the settlement.[5] Le Tellier remained in office till October 1791. During his administration the old difficulties in relation to Tipu and the English persisted and became even more pronounced. During the Anglo-Mysore war the English seized the territories of the Nayar of Kurangod on the plea of their belonging to Tipu, although the French claimed them to be a part of their possessions. The English also searched and sometimes seized French ships navigating between Mangalore and Mahé on the plea of their carrying contraband goods.

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[1] P. A. ms. 4571.

[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 4652.

[3] *Ibid.*, ms. 1186.

[4] *Ibid.*, ms. 4673.

[5] *Ibid.*, ms. 4668 (instructions dated 10th April 1790).

A prolonged correspondence followed between Le Tellier and Taylor, the Chief of the English settlement at Tellicherry, but the French failed to get any redress.[1]

Difficulties with Tipu and the English were not the only preoccupation of Le Tellier. The main interest of his period of administration was the beginning of the revolution at Mahé, following the example of the other French settlements in India. It is not known exactly how and when the revolution commenced at Mahé. The first somewhat connected account about the beginning of the revolution there is to be found in Le Tellier's letter to de Fresne, Governor of Pondicherry, dated 5th April 1791, from which it appears that the revolution started about six months earlier.[2] The maker of the revolution was one Boyer, agent of the new Company. While the administration was languishing for want of money, Boyer had at his disposal large funds, part of which he utilised on his own account to win popularity among the citizens. The news of the revolution in Paris and in the Isle of France gave him an opportunity to come into prominence and seize power. From Le Tellier's letter to de Fresne, mentioned above, it appears that early in December 1790 the citizens of Mahé constituted a Colonial Assembly with Boyer as President. The approval of the Commandant was sought, but he was told plainly enough that his disapproval would not affect the decision of the citizens. The *Conseil* or court of justice was abolished and its place was taken by a committee set up by the Colonial Assembly, which also organised a National Guard, placed under the command of Menesse. The Committee arrogated to itself all the administrative functions, including control over finance and police. Le Tellier was a timid person, and having no definite instructions either from the Isle of France or from Pondicherry about the policy he was to follow in the new circumstances, he gave way to every demand of the Colonial Assembly and its Committee.

In April 1791 the arrival from Pondicherry of an employee of the Company, named de Gondreville, brought about a temporary change in the situation. Under his persuasion Boyer realised that he had gone too far in disorganising the machinery of administration in the settlement, and at a session of the Colonial Assembly, held on the 16th April, it was decided to restore the authority of the Commandant and of the old *Conseil*. The makers of the earlier revolution satisfied themselves by merely establishing a municipal body, of which Boyer was elected Mayor.[1] Thus calm was restored for the time being. But shortly after troubles started once more out of a personal quarrel between Boyer and the commander of the National Guard, Menesse, supported by a private merchant named Langlade. The all-powerful Mayor had his opponents arrested and brought for trial before the *Conseil*. The trial, which lasted for more than three months, caused great excitement among the partisans on both sides. Ultimately, Langlade escaped from prison, and Menesse was sent to Pondicherry to be tried by the *Conseil Supérieur*.[2] In October Le Tellier was replaced by Larcher as Commandant.[3] He left Mahé in January 1792 and went to the Isle of France.

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[1] P. A. mss. 4683, 4687, 4688, 4691-4693, 4701, 4706, 4708, 4711, 4714, 4720, 4737, 4738, 4743, 4756, 5024.

[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 4767.

III. *Administration of Larcher—restoration of peace.*

Larcher, who succeeded Le Tellier, was a stronger person and knew how to deal with the state of affairs such as had developed at Mahé. Within a short time he succeeded in gaining control over the situation and calming the excitement which had arisen over the affair of Menesse and Langlade. During the first few months of his administration the main preoccupations of Larcher were the relations with Tipu and the English, who were still at war. Tipu's men often made incursions into French territory, while the English insisted on searching every French vessel for contraband of war. They carried their practice to such a length as to board and inspect a French ship, the *Jeune Créole*, in the roadstead of Mahé; and on another occasion they attacked a French frigate, the

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[1] P. A. mss. 4673 (Proceedings of the Assembly, 16th April 1791) and 4674 (letter of Le Tellier to de Fresne, 18th April, 1791).

[2] *Ibid.*, mss. 4788, 4789, 4811 (letters from Le Tellier to de Fresne dated 4th July, 20th July and 16th September 1791).

[3] *Ibid.*, mss. 4814, 4815.

Resolue. Larcher vehemently protested to Cornwallis, who commanded the English squadron, against such high-handed actions but failed to get any redress, Cornwallis insisting on the right of a belligerent to search neutral vessels for contraband of war.[1]

In May 1792 the *Conseil Supérieur* at Pondicherry gave its judgment in the case against Menesse. The charge against him was dismissed, and he was awarded damages against his accusers. Fortified by this judgment, Menesse returned to Mahé in June, Langlade having come back earlier. Immediately after his arrival Menesse, joined by his supporters, demanded the summoning of a General Assembly. It met on the 24th June, and under the influence of the judgment of the *Conseil Supérieur,* vindicating Menesse and condemning Boyer and his associates, it elected a new Committee of nine members, Menesse and Langlade getting the largest number of votes and the party of Boyer being defeated. Boyer and the other municipal officers resigned.[2] When, however, the new Committee asked for recognition from the Commandant, Larcher refused on the ground that the proceedings of the General Assembly were irregular. But at the same time he accepted the resignation of Boyer from the post of Mayor. Thus by one stroke he sought to get rid of both the factions.[3]

There started a dispute between the new Committee and the Commandant, which was ended by summoning another General Assembly on the 8th July.[4] Harangued by Larcher, the new Assembly took a decision to restore all authority to the administration and not to set up either a committee or a municipality, pending the arrival of the Civil Commissioners who had been sent out from France to reform the administrative organisation in the different settlements.[1] This sudden turn in affairs took both the contending factions by surprise, who now complained against Larcher to the Governor of Pondicherry. Larcher tried to defend his conduct,[2] but de Fresne felt that he had gone too far in taking an active part in local politics. However, the situation was saved by a letter from Lescallier, one of the Civil Commissioners who had already arrived at Pondicherry, informing the citizens of Mahé of his intention to visit the settlement in October 1793.[3] That stopped all further troubles, and the General Assembly decided not to introduce any innovation till the arrival of the Civil Commissioner. In January 1793 Larcher could report to de Fresne that calm had been restored at Mahé.[4]

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[1] P. A. ms. 4820 (Larcher to Cornwallis, 24th October, 1791), ms. 4822 (Larcher to Cornwallis, 1st November). ms. 4823 (Cornwallis to Larcher, 3rd November), ms. 4824 (Cornwallis to Larcher, 5th November), ms. 4830 (Larcher to de Fresne, 18th November), ms. 4833 (a detailed account of the capture of the *Resolue* by an officer on board), ms. 4849 (Larcher to de Fresne, 20th January 1792).

[2] *Ibid.*, mss. 4893, 4894 (Proceedings of the Assembly, 24th June, and of the new Committee, 25th June 1792).

[3] *Ibid.*, ms. 4897 (Larcher to Menesse, 28th June 1792).

[4] *Ibid.*, ms. 4901.

Although faction-fighting had stopped, Mahé was faced with a new danger when news reached about the outbreak of war between England and France. On the 21st June Larcher summoned a General Assembly to communicate the news to the citizens and to concert measures for the defence of the settlement against an impending attack by the English. He gave a frank account of the situation,—the old fortifications completely destroyed, and the garrison consisting of 88 sepoys with three European officers. Marin, the *Ordonnateur*, informed the Assembly about the state of the treasury, containing only six thousand rupees, and about the inadequate stock of provisions. The Assembly set up a Political Committee to decide how to meet the sudden danger. It met on the same date and came to the conclusion that defence was out of the question. It informed Larcher that the only thing that could be done was to capitulate on honourable terms, that would save the dignity of the nation and the interests of the citizens of Mahé.[5] Accordingly, when on the 13th July Col. Hartley, commanding the English forces on the Malabar Coast, sent a detachment of troops under Captain George

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[1] P. A. mss. 4902, 4903.

[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 4933 (Larcher to de Fresne, 28th September 1792).

[3] *Ibid.*, ms. 4948 (Larcher to de Fresne, 30th November 1792), ms. 4962 (citizens of Mahé to Lescallier, 7th January, 1793).

[4] *Ibid.*, ms. 4963 (Larcher to de Fresne, 9th January 1793).

[5] *Ibid.*, ms. 4988 (Proceedings of the General Assembly, 21st June 1793, and of the Committee elected by it).

Mackenzie and summond Larcher to surrender the settlement, the latter made no difficulty in accepting the terms of capitulation brought by Mackenzie. The English offered to accord full honours of war to the French garrison and promised to respect the rights of property of private citizens. Following the acceptance of the terms, Mahé was surrendered to the English on the 16th July.[1]

Calicut and Surat

Only a brief notice need be taken of the two French factories at Calicut and Surat during the period under review. As we have noticed already, the administrative re-organisation of the Indian possessions decreed by the French Ministry in 1787 transferred the charge of the subordinate factories to the newly established Company.[2] At the beginning of 1788 the factory at Calicut was handed over to the Company's agent, de Court,[3] but the Company failed to revive French trade there and the factory remained in a moribund condition. In 1792 after the conclusion of the Anglo-Mysore war, the English pulled down the flag from the French factory, claiming sovereignty over the whole district of Calicut as a result of their treaty with Tipu. The protests of Larcher, Commandant of Mahé, were ignored.[4] Finally, in June 1793, on the news of the outbreak of war in Europe, the English closed the French factory altogether.

The French regained possession of their factory at Surat in 1788, with the arrival of Bruix as Consul. The factory, however, ceased to be of any commercial importance during the period under review. Bruix has left an interesting *mémoire* on its chequered history since its first establishment in 1669.[1] For two years, 1791 to 1793, he was away in the Isle of France. He returned to Surat in April 1793, and in spite of the outbreak of war he was allowed by the English to remain in charge of the factory till 1794.

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[1] P. A. ms. 4992 (correspondence between Hartley and Larcher and the terms of capitulation).

[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 960 (Castries to Souillac, 14th February 1787).

[3] *Ibid.*, ms. 4558.

[4] *Ibid.*, mss. 4862, 4863 (correspondence between Larcher and Taylor, Chief of Tellicherry, April 2-4, 1792), ms. 4870 (correspondence between Larcher and de Fresne, April 1792), ms. 4957 (correspondence between the authorities of Mahé and Tellicherry).

KARIKAL

I. *Administrative measures from 1785 to 1791: insurrections of peasants and workers.*

During the period under review Karikal kept up its tradition of not laying any claim to political importance and existing merely as the granary of Pondicherry, although it also experienced in a mild way the shock of the Revolution, and its small French population of fifteen attempted in their humble way to play the drama of the Revolution. It was on the 26th February 1785 that de Boistel, sent from Pondicherry, retook possession of Karikal with its dependent territories from Fallofield, agent of the Madras Government.[2] It may be remembered that de Boistel had been Commandant at Karikal in 1778 before the outbreak of war with the English. In 1785 he resumed his functions only for a few months, till his death in June. The most important event during his short administration was his attempt to establish political relations with the Raja of Tanjore, which met with a sharp rebuff from the English, who claimed sovereignty over the kingdom and refused to allow a French embassy escorted by a small sepoy force to enter the town of Tanjore.[3]

De Boistel was succeeded by de Mainville, who was replaced by Marguenat in 1788. The principal preoccupation of the administration at this time was to increase cultivation, and the records of the settlement of this period, preserved in the Pondicherry Archives, contain interesting details about the method of cultivation, the distribution of the produce between the peasants and the Government, and the steps taken to encourage the extension of tillage.[1] Another preoccupation of the administration was to develop the industry of weaving and dyeing of cotton fabrics, for which purpose a large number of workers were invited from inland to settle in two villages, Soupayapouram and Cassaoudy. Besides agriculture and the manufacture of cotton goods, Karikal had also another economic importance. It was one of the two centres, Yanam being the other, for the manufacture of salt, the export of which to Bengal was practically the only avenue of trade open to the French in India and constituted an important source of income to the Government.

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[1] P. A. ms. 5074.

[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 3986 (official document of restitution).

[3] *Ibid.*, ms. 3989. (correspondence between Coutenceau, Governor of Pondicherry, and Madras Government).

In 1787 Karikal experienced a grave agrarian disturbance. Bellecombe had made a regulation in 1777 laying down an equitable distribution of the produce of agriculture between the tiller and the State. In 1787 the Indian farmer of lands, Xaverimoutoupollé, sought to change the basis of distribution to the detriment of the cultivators, who in protest refused to till the lands and left French territory in a body. The total stoppage of cultivation in the villages of Karikal was too alarming for Pondicherry, and Conway, then Governor, promptly sent de Fresne to Karikal to effect a satisfactory settlement with the cultivators. De Fresne succeeded in his mission and the cultivators returned to their fields early in 1788.[2] Shortly after there was a similar disturbance among the salt-workers also, who demanded an increase in their share of the produce, and the matter was satisfactorily settled by a regulation made by Conway in May 1788.[3] In 1791 there was again a serious agrarian disturbance, which arose out of the grievances of the cultivators against the farmer of lands. It even assumed the nature of an insurrection when the cultivators were joined by the *Visiadors* or local constabulary and toll-collectors. The Pondicherry Government had to intervene once more, and de Fresne sent de Touffreville with 100 European troops to restore order. De Touffreville was also appointed at the same time Commandant at Karikal. By a policy of severity combined with moderation he succeeded in putting down the insurrection and persuading the cultivators and the *Visiadors* to return to their work. Peace was fully restored by April 1792.[1] These popular movements among the Indian inhabitants at Karikal were something new in the history of the French possessions in India, and stood in marked contrast to the docility of the indigenous population in the other settlements. The only probable explanation was the large number of the Indian population at Karikal and their being comparatively well off than the population in the other settlements.[2]

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[1] P. A. mss. 3988, 4030.

[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 4042.

[3] *Ibid.*, ms. 4049.

II. *The Revolution and After (1791-93).*

The European population, on the other hand, proved more docile, and the news of the Revolution produced a milder effect at Karikal than at the other settlements. There was, no doubt, an attempt to set up a civic organisation based on the normal Revolutionary pattern, but there was no disturbance of the peace, and happy relations were maintained with the Commandant and the Pondicherry Government. The first news of the Revolution in France brought by the *Bienvenue* in February 1791 and the establishment of the first Citizens' Committee at Pondicherry did not produce even a ripple in the peaceful life at Karikal. It was only in April 1791 when the second Citizens' Committee at Pondicherry sent a circular letter to all the other French settlements in India, inviting them to nominate their representatives in the Committee from among its own members, that there was some excitement among the citizens of Karikal. Partly because of their opposition to a small group of Pondicherians monopolising all power to the exclusion of the people of the other settlements, partly because of the injustice which they felt had been done to them by the Pondicherry Government in the matter of the distribution of salt permits, the citizens of Karikal decided to set up a civic organisation of their own to protect their interests. In May they established a municipality and elected Bonvoust as

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[1] Labernadie—*La Revolution et les Etablissements Français dans l'Inde*, pp. 169-170.

[2] There is a compleee census of population in 1789 preserved in the Pondicherry Archives, ms. 4112.

Mayor. The Pondicherry Committee objected to this move as illegal and sought to interfere in the internal affairs of Karikal.[1] Shortly after, the second Committee at Pondicherry was replaced by a Colonial Assembly intended to be representative of all the French settlements in India. In July this new body also declared the municipal organisation at Karikal illegal and invited its citizens to elect a deputy for the Colonial Assembly at Pondicherry. The Karikalians then showed a more conciliatory attitude. On the 16th July they called a General Assembly of citizens, consisting of 17 persons only, which decided to abolish the municipality and to establish in its place a committee of three members. It also elected a deputy and an alternate for the Colonial Assembly at Pondicherry.[2]

From that time all was quiet at Karikal, and its citizens willingly took directives from Pondicherry on every matter. In September they expressed their indignation over the "incendiary letter" of the Chandernagore Committee, inciting the Pondicherry garrison to revolt.[3] In January 1792 they sent a *mémoire* to the Pondicherry Assembly on the needs of the settlement. They prayed for money to dig irrigation canals for the improvement of agriculture, to broaden the mouth of the river so as to allow the passage of larger vessels, and to construct a wall and a ditch round the town and maintain a garrison of 300 sepoys and 50 European troops in order to attract by its security wealthy merchants from outside. They added that the money spent on these improvements would in a short while be fully compensated by increased receipts on different heads.[4] There was no money, however, and the Pondicherry Assembly confined its reply to a mere expression of sympathy.[5] In July there was a rift between the priests and the citizens of Karikal over the question of the acceptance of the Constitution of the Clergy, which was settled for the time being, but in 1793 it led to the withdrawal of the priests from the settlement.[1] In December 1792 Lescallier, who had come to Karikal to reorganise the settlement, invited the citizens to meet in a Primary Assembly to elect a deputy for the reconstituted Colonial Assembly at Pondicherry. The Karikalians elected Baissac, a merchant of Pondicherry, as their representative.[2]

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[1] Labernadie—*La Revolution et les Etablissements Français dans l'Inde*, pp. 170-171.

[2] P. A. mss. 4248, 4249, 4258 (Proceedings of the Citizens' Assembly, 16th July and 18th September 1791).

[3] *Ibid*, 4260.

[4] *Ibid.*, ms. 4282 (Proceedings of the Citizens' Assembly, 20th January 1792).

[5] *Ibid.*, ms. 4297.

In May 1793 Lescallier was again at Karikal, accompanied by the other Civil Commissioner, Dumorier. The object of the visit was to investigate the charge brought by the Pondicherry Assembly against the Commandant of Karikal, Touffreville, of putting difficulties in the way of supply of provisions to Pondicherry, which was beginning to feel alarmed at the prospect of a war with the English and was trying to lay in stock in time. The accusation was, however, found to be quite unjustified.[3] The end was approaching fast. In June the imminence of the war was no longer a matter of conjecture, and in order to strengthen the defences of Pondicherry by all available forces, Chermont, the Governor, sent an order to Touffreville to come to his assistance with the garrison at Karikal, leaving that settlement to the English. On the 19th June Touffreville evacuated Karikal with its small garrison, and immediately after William Mitchell, the English Resident at Nagore, took possession of the settlement. Thus, as in 1778, Karikal surrendered itself without a fight in the interest of Pondicherry.

YANAM

About Yanam there is nothing much to notice. The records relating to this settlement in the Pondicherry Archives are very meagre, and those that exist are nearly all of the Revolutionary period. On the whole the history of Yanam during the period under review was uneventful, except for a brief interlude of excitement in 1791, when the handful of the French population there, only fifteen in number, tried to play the drama of the Revolution in their own way. Yanam was restored to the French in February 1785. Martin, who retook possession of the settlement from the English, was succeeded for short terms as Commandant by Mallendré and Bluter, but for the major part of the period the post was held by the famous traveller, scholar and scientist, Sonnerat, well-known for his three volumes of *Voyage aux Indes Orientales et en Chine.* The task of the Commandant at Yanam was not very exacting since the place had no political importance whatsoever and its inhabitants wanted nothing better than to be left in peace to carry on their trading activities. Yanam had some commercial importance. It was, like Karikal, a centre for the manufacture of salt, and in fact Yanam salt constituted the major part of the quantity imported by the French into Bengal. Yanam was also an important centre of cotton goods and supplied a large part of the return cargo of the French ships visiting India. The handful of French citizens at Yanam were fully occupied by these two lucrative branches of commerce and had no interest in political or administrative matters, which were left entirely to the Commandant. Thus the news of the Revolution and the formation of the first Committee at Pondicherry left the citizens of Yanam cold. It was commercial jealousy which gave rise to the first disturbance in the peaceful life of the settlement.

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[1] P. A. mss. 4342, 4346, 4349 (Proceedings of the Citizens' Assembly, July-August 1792).

[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 4375 (letter of Lescallier, 23rd December), mss. 4377-4379 (Proceedings of the Citizens' Assembly, 28th-29th December).

[3] *Ibid.*, ms. 4409 (letter of the Civil Commissioners to the Colonial Assembly at Pondicherry, 6th May 1793).

Sonnerat carried on private trade, utilising for that purpose his official position as Commandant, which put the other merchants of the place at a disadvantage. In July 1790 two of the prominent merchants, Le Canne and de Mars, complained to de Fresne and the first Committee at Pondicherry against Sonnerat for abusing his position for his private benefit and wanted his recall.[1] The complaint produced no effect,[2] and for some time all was quiet at Yanam. It was only in April

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[1] P. A. mss. 5102-5104 (Letters of Le Canne and de Mars to the President of the Assembly at Pondicherry and to the Governor, 5th July 1790).

[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 5105 (President of the Pondicherry Assembly to de Mars, 17th July).

1791, on the receipt of the circular letter of the second Committee at Pondicherry sent to all the settlements, that the citizens of Yanam thought of seizing the occasion to get rid of not so much a tyrannical administrator as a powerful commercial rival. They set up a Colonial Assembly, elected a permanent Committee of three, and adopted a new Constitution for the settlement, by which the Commandant was divested of practically all his powers, which were transferred to the Assembly and its Committee. Sonnerat thought it prudent to yield before the storm and gave his consent to all the measures passed by the Assembly. Perhaps, he did it all the more willingly in order to be left free to devote his time to scientific studies. The Assembly was not content with merely taking away the powers of the Commandant; it decided to reduce his emoluments. Finally, it elected Danzas, a member of the second Committee at Pondicherry, to represent Yanam on that body.[1]

The enthusiasm of the citizens of Yanam, however, met with a sharp rebuff from Pondicherry. Danzas, after consultation with the President of the Pondicherry Committee, wrote to the citizens of Yanam pointing out the illegality of their actions in usurping all authority from the Commandant and asking them to convene another General Assembly to cancel their previous decisions and to represent their desires to the Pondicherry Committee.[2] The letter of Danzas created a division among the citizens. The minority dissociated themselves from the earlier decisions and wanted to restore all authority to the Commandant,[3] while the majority wrote to the Pondicherry Committee giving an account of the events of the past few months and defending their conduct.[4] In July the citizens of Yanam were invited to elect a representative to the newly set up Colonial Assembly at Pondicherry. They elected Fermier as their deputy, but the difference between the majority and the minority continued and seemed impossible of solution.

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[1] P. A. ms. 5110 (documents relating to the Colonial Assembly at Yanam, April-June 1791).

[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 5108 (letter of Danzas, 2nd February, 1791).

[3] *Ibid.*, ms. 5112.

[4] *Ibid.*, ms. 5111.

The main point of dispute was control over police and justice. In August both parties joined in appealing to the Colonial Assembly at Pondicherry to send a Conciliation Commissioner. At the same time the majority decided to refer the question to the Indian inhabitants of Yanam, whether they would like to see the control over police and justice vested in the Committee or in the hands of the Commandant alone. It was something new in the whole history of the French in India, when the European citizens, failing to agree among themselves, decided to seek the opinion of the Indian inhabitants. The motive was, however, obvious, but the dispute could not be settled in that way, for both parties could collect a number of Indian inhabitants to support their points of view.[1]

In September there arrived two Conciliation Commissioners from Pondicherry, Mery d'Arcy and La Faye, but till the middle of October they failed to bring about a compromise and were about to return, when on the 16th there took place an incident which gave a sudden turn to the situation. It arose from the insulting conduct of a Frenchman to an influential Brahmin merchant of the place, who gathered four hundred men for retaliation. The small European population was in grave danger, and the two Conciliation Commissioners could with difficulty pacify the crowd by promising justice. The threat of a popular rising had the immediate effect of bringing the two contending parties together. The General Assembly met on the same day and decided unanimously to restore all powers to the Commandant to avoid further troubles with the Indian population.[2] From that time the citizens of Yanam gave up all interest in politics and went to the other extreme of abolishing the representation of the settlement in the Pondicherry Assembly.[3] All through 1792 they remained impervious to the appeals of the Pondicherry Assembly not to abolish their representation on that body and not to disinterest themselves altogether from the administrative re-organisation of the different settlements.[1]

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[1] P. A. mss. 5115, 5116, 5119, 5121-5126 (letters from the Pondicherry Assembly, Proceedings of the Assembly at Yanam and the views of the Indian inhabitants, July-August 1791).

[2] *Ibid,* ms. 5130 (letter of the two Conciliation Commissioners to de Fresne, 16th October), ms. 5134 (Proceedings of the Citizens' Assembly at Yanam, 16th October), ms. 5135 (Sonnerat to de Fresne, 17th October).

[3] *Ibid,* ms. 5139.

It was not till the beginning of 1793 that the citizens of Yanam decided to give up their attitude of indifference. Meeting in a Primary Assembly in January of that year, according to the procedure laid down by the Civil Commissioners, they elected their representative for the newly set up Assembly at Pondicherry.[2] Resuming their interest in political affairs rather unwillingly because of the old rebuff from Pondicherry, they returned to their attack on Sonnerat and wrote to the Pondicherry Assembly for his recall.[3] At the beginning of June the Pondicherry Assembly replied that although Sonnerat could not be recalled for want of more definite charges, he would be forbidden to engage in private trade and that the citizens of Yanam could take away from the Commandant the powers which they had willingly given in October 1791. Yanam at last got its opportunity to turn the tables on Pondicherry, but the outbreak of war soon after and the prompt seizure of the place by the English prevented the citizens from enjoying their sweet revenge.

MASULIPATAM

Close to Yanam was the factory at Masulipatam. The French possessed there the factory proper within the town and a small village named Francepeth about two miles away. Little is known of the Masulipatam factory during the period under review, and the few records concerning it preserved in the Pondicherry Archives deal only with the first two years after its restoration to the French. The only possible explanation for this is that at the end of 1787 the Masulipatam factory was transferred to the control of the newly established Company of Calonne, and thus it ceased to have any official connection with the Pondicherry administration. In 1778 the factory at

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[1] P. A. mss. 5143, 5145 (letters from the President of the Pondicherry Assembly to the Citizens of Yanam, 2nd and 15th April 1792) ms. 5146 (reply of the citizens of Yanam, 5th May).

[2] *Ibid.*, mss. 5147, 5150, 5152, 5155-5157.

[3] *Ibid.*, ms. 5153 (Proceedings of the Citizens' Assembly, 25th April 1793).

Masulipatam together with the village of Francepeth had fallen, like the other French possessions in India, into the hands of the English. During the period of occupation a part of the territory of the French factory was encroached upon by the English for the construction of a new Government House. This caused great embarrassment to the English after the peace treaty, by which all the French possessions in India had to be restored, and they had to agree to give to the French another suitable territory in place of the old. It was on the 16th March 1785 that Le Forestier retook possession of the factory and the village of Francepeth from the English.[1] Till about the end of the year correspondence went on between Le Forestier and the English Council at Masulipatam about the proposed exchange of territory. Le Forestier took full advantage of the embarrassing position of the English in having constructed buildings on a territory which now legally belonged to the French. He thus refused to accept merely a territory of equal size but demanded in addition the value of the constructions made by the English on French territory, which was estimated at 500 gold pagodas.[2] The demand had to be accepted by the English in order to get out of a difficult situation.[3]

In another matter, however, the French failed to get their demand accepted. The peace treaty had assured them the enjoyment of all their old trading rights and privileges, which so far as the Masulipatam factory was concerned included exemption from all duties on imports and exports. At the time of taking possession of the factory in March 1785, Le Forestier was assured by the English authorities that no difficulty would be placed in the way of the freedom of French trade and commerce.[4] Yet, when some of the neighbouring Zamindars began to impose duties on goods meant for the French factory and Le Forestier appealed to the English authorities to use their influence to stop such exactions, the latter expressed their inability to intervene.[1] Not only that, even the English authorities began to levy customs duties on goods exported by the French, and when Le Forestier protested against it as a violation of the peace treaty, the Madras Government conceded that only goods belonging to persons living within the factory would be exempt from customs duties but not those belonging to persons living outside.[2] It was in fact a part of the general Anglo-French dispute about the interpretation of the commercial clauses of the peace treaty which we have noticed already.

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[1] P. A. ms. 5190.

[2] *Ibid*, ms. 5197 (Forestier to the English Council at Masulipatam, 20th May 1785), ms. 5199 (Forestier to the Pondicherry Government, 3rd June).

[3] *Ibid*, mss. 5201, 5208, 5209.

[4] *Ibid*, ms. 5191.

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[1] P. A. ms. 5205 (Forestier to the English Council at Masulipatam, 18th August, 1785), ms. 5206 (English reply, 19th August), ms. 5207 (Forestier to Souillac at Pondicherry, 25th August).

[2] *Ibid.*, mss. 5212-5214, 5217, 5218, 5221 (letters exchanged between Forestier, Governor of Pondicherry and the English Council at Masulipatam on French trading rights).

CHAPTER XVIII

RELATIONS WITH INDIAN POWERS (1785-1793)

I. *Change in French Policy.*

During the period under review French political ambitions in India and relations with the country Powers underwent a complete change from the earlier period. The Seven Years' War, in spite of the disasters it had brought to the hopes and ambitions of the French, had not damped their spirit altogether. They looked upon it merely as a temporary misadventure, and from the moment of their re-establishment in 1765 they began to cherish once more the old dreams of the time of Dupleix, although in a somewhat changed form necessitated by the altered circumstances. During the thirteen years which elapsed before the outbreak of the next war in 1778, a large number of Frenchmen in India, including Governors and subordinate officials, diplomatic agents, military men and adventurers of fortune, showed feverish activity in laying down grandiose plans of alliance with the country Powers and military operations against the English. They flooded the Ministry of Marine and Colonies with *mémoires* and letters. In France also the hope of reviving the lost position in India had not altogether disappeared, and from time to time the Government showed spasmodic interest in the various schemes submitted, an interest which increased with the approach of the War of American Independence. No doubt, many of the plans of this period were absolutely fantastic, but they all bring out one thing clearly, that the old ambitions had not died out completely and that the French were thinking and planning in terms of a return match with the hope of being able to recapture their lost position.

After 1783 the situation changed completely. During the next ten years, prior to the renewal of hostilities in 1793, the earlier political dreams faded away, and France evinced an increasing lack of interest in Indian affairs. The Peace Treaty of 1783 restored to the French all the territories and commercial privileges which they had possessed in India before the outbreak of the war. Yet, they lost their old enthusiasm about the future of their position in India; and in place of the plethora of political and military projects of the earlier period, there was an increasing indifference to looking beyond the immediate prospect or thinking of anything but the immediate problems. In contrast to the earlier period, general *mémoires* on the Indian situation and political and military projects became far too scanty. Not only did all enthusiasm for drawing up plans for the extension of political influence in India evaporate all on a sudden; there was little interest even in the consolidation and preservation of the existing possessions. This sudden change may be attributed to three factors. First was the frustration of the attempt made in 1781-83. France had put forward vigorous efforts to retrieve her lost position. She had sent a large expeditionary force under a brilliant hero of the past, and a strong navy in support under one of the ablest naval commanders she ever produced; but in the end she failed to achieve any tangible success. The second factor was the rapid extension of English power in India. In the recent wars with the Marathas and with Haidar and Tipu they had proved their worth in the field of battle as well as their ability in diplomacy. After 1783 there was little eagerness on the part of any Indian Power to challenge English domination.

The third factor was the approaching collapse of the *Ancien Régime,* which diverted the attention of France from colonial ventures to concentrate entirely on the solution of internal problems. This is not the place to discuss in detail the causes that led to the fall of the *Ancien Régime* and ushered in a new era in France and in Europe. It is sufficient to remember that the prospect of financial bankruptcy was one of the most important factors leading to the Revolution. The French financial system had been creaking for a long time under the weight of the thousand and one abuses associated with the *Ancien Régime.* Intervention in the War of American Independence had put the last straw on the camel's back, and after 1783 total collapse became not only inevitable but also imminent. This had its effect on Coronial policy. For a few years efforts were made to reduce expenditure on colonies in a vain attempt to save the existing financial structure. Thus it was that the management of the factories at Masulipatam, Calicut and Surat was transferred to the Company of Calonne, that the Indian possessions were grouped with the Isles of France and Bourbon into one Government, that their administrative expenses were severely curtailed, and that orders were sent out for the withdrawal of all the French troops from India.

In this drive for economy all political ambitions in India had to be sacrificed. But it was not merely the financial embarrassment of the Government which was responsible for the change of policy. Equally important was the fact that with the approach of the Revolution attention in France was concentrated entirely on internal reconstruction; for the time being secondary questions, like the future of overseas colonies, were pushed out of mind. With the outbreak of the Revolutionary War in Europe, France entered on a new phase of her history. She was fired with a new mission, and her gaze was fixed on the Continent. The wonderful successes of her arms against the whole of monarchical Europe gave her a new intoxication, which took many years to pass off. It was only natural that she readily sacrificed her overseas possessions in order to be able to concentrate all her energies in the fulfilment of her new mission in Europe.

It was the financial embarrassment after 1783, coupled with total indifference to political ambitions in India, that shaped French relations with the country Powers during the period under review. For some time after 1785 the French Government still wanted the maintenance of close diplomatic relations with the Indian Powers in order to build up an anti-English coalition for the next war, but enjoined on the local authorities in India the avoidance of any definite commitment. Successive Governors, like Souillac. Conway, Cossigny and de Fresne, and diplomatic agents, like Montigny and Godard, stressed the importance of maintaining close relations with the country Powers with a view to form an anti-English coalition, but the unwillingness of the French Government to enter into definite commitments or to go beyond verbal assurances of friendship and support was not conducive to inspiring confidence among those whose alliance was sought. French officers in the service of the Indian Princes, like Aumont, Raymond, Piron, de Lallée and Vigie, repeatedly begged for troops and arms in order to increase their contingents. They held out the assurance that it would increase French political influence over the country Powers, and would further enable the French authorities in India to draw upon the assistance of these national contingents in case of a war with the English. But in spite of the strongest recommendations of de Fresne, these prayers were rejected by the French Government, engrossed after 1789 in the immediate problems at home.

Thus French relations with the country Powers between 1785 and 1793 followed a course of drift, without any definite objective. The Deputies of the French Indian possessions in the National Assembly in Paris expressed regret at the indifference of the home Government to Indian affairs and urged a more vigorous policy for ensuring the safety of the possessions and for drawing closer relations with the country Powers. The representation went unheeded. In 1794, after the fall of all the French possessions in India, Lescallier, one of the Civil Commissioners, sent a detailed report to France on the Indian political situation and urged a more active policy to recover the lost position in the East. But that report was also shelved, and it was not till after the Treaty of Amiens that, thanks to the imagination of the First Consul, France turned her attention once more to the East. The revival of interest, however, proved to be short-lived and came to an end with the renewal of hostilities in Europe.

II. *The Despatch of Castries, outlining relations with Indian Powers.*

The policy which the French Government wanted to pursue in relation to the Indian Powers after 1785 was outlined in a despatch of Maréchal de Castries, Minister of Marine, dated 14th February 1787.[1] It was written in reply to a report on the Indian political situation and the future of French possessions drawn up by Souillac in September 1785. In his despatch Castries declared that since the Mughal Emperor had ceased to count among the important Powers of India, it was useless for the French to maintain diplomatic relations with him and to keep an agent at his *Darbar*. It meant, in effect, that the French were not to concern themselves with north India any more, and signified a definite abandonment of the policy advocated by Chevalier and Madec before the last war for an alliance with the Emperor. As regards the Maratha ruler of Nagpur, whose co-operation Chevalier had sought to facilitate an attack on Bengal, Castries wrote that it would no doubt be wise to cultivate friendly relations with the Bhonsla Raja, but at the same time it was necessary to observe strict circumspection in dealing with him. He was so closely watched by the English that it would be unwise to reveal to him all the French plans.

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[1] P. A. ms. 960.

Castries also felt that it was useless to maintain close diplomatic relations with Hyderabad. Nizam Ali appeared to have definitely passed into the orbit of the English, and in any case he would not take any positive move in the interest of the French. So Castries suggested that Aumont, who had been serving as French diplomatic agent at the Court of Nizam Ali, should be recalled, as also all the French military adventurers scattered throughout India. Castries continued that the Marathas undoubtedly constituted the strongest Power in India, but not much co-operation could be expected from them. As he expressed, the Marathas "have so little interest to ally themselves with us that they are not likely to take the measures that we may recommend to them." Even then, the Minister felt, it would be necessary to deal with them with tact and prudence, without however making great *démarche* to win them over. Montigny was to be replaced at Poona by a Brahmin *Wakil*, not because he had proved inefficient, but because the appointment of a Brahmin would be more in conformity with the usages of the country.

There remained only one other Power, Mysore. which because of its persistent hostility towards the English appeared the natural ally of France. In order to win over Tipu it was necessary to convince him "about the desire we have to co-operate with him to prevent the English from remaining the masters of India." The special solicitude to win over Tipu was not to mean, however, that the French should take sides in internal politics and give help to Tipu against other country Powers. Castries clearly stated that the objective of French policy in India was to preserve peace among the country Powers, to keep them all united in one block, so that with the outbreak of the next war in Europe the French could attempt to turn them against the English. Under the existing circumstances, however, as pointed out by Montigny in his letter to Souillac in November 1785,[1] such a plan was difficult of execution. It was impossible to preserve peace among Tipu, the Marathas and Nizam Ali and to keep them united, waiting for a far-off eventuality of a common war against the English. Finally, referring to Muhammad Ali, Nawab of the Carnatic, Castries approved of the reserve with which Souillac had received his overtures. The Nawab had, perhaps, found his position too galling, but his connection with the English was so effective that he would never be able to break it, unless the French achieved resounding military successes in India.

After noticing the general policy advocated by the Minister, let us next trace in more detail French relations with the Marathas, Nizam Ali and Tipu Sultan during the period under review.

III. *Relations with the Marathas.*

At Poona, it will be remembered, Montigny had been working as French diplomatic agent since 1781. We have noticed in detail the efforts he had made to bring about a Franco-Maratha alliance and their ultimate failure. He still remained at his post after the conclusion of peace in 1783, but his task became increasingly difficult in the new circumstances. Bussy was strongly prejudiced against the Marathas, and his views seemed to have prevailed upon the Ministry at home, as would be evident from the outline of policy laid down in the despatch of Castries. Montigny, however, did not lose heart and persisted, down to his recall from Poona about the middle of 1788, in trying to establish closer relations between the French and the Marathas. The main difficulty for him was the impression at Poona that the French were in alliance with Tipu. Montigny was hard put to it to convince the Marathas that the French had no intention of giving military help to

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[1] P. A. ms. 5356.

Tipu in his aggressive designs against other country Powers. The French did, in fact, observe strict neutrality during the war of 1785-87 between the Marathas and Nizam Ali on one side and Tipu on the other. The Governor of Pondicherry also offered his good offices for mediation and even sent a special envoy named Godard to Poona. But the policy of neutrality failed to create any favourable impression among the Marathas, who gradually drew away from the French; and after the recall of Montigny from Poona in 1788, Franco-Maratha relations virtually came to an end.

Soon after his assumption of office as Governor of Pondicherry in May 1785, Souillac entered into correspondence with the two most important Maratha leaders, Sindhia and Nana Phadnavis. To Sindhia, who had established his control over what remained of the Mughal Empire, Souillac wrote that he had been entrusted by the King of France to inform the Emperor of Delhi and the other Princes of India of his intention to liberate them from the tyranny of the English and to restore their lost territories. Souillac expressed a hope that when the suitable occasion would come, Sindhia would agree to work in concert with the French against their common enemy.[1] It was a vain hope, as Sindhia had already made a definite understanding with the English, and there was little likelihood of his joining hands with the French.

Souillac also wrote to Nana Phadnavis, with the object of removing the threatening conflict between the Marathas and Tipu and trying to bring them into an alliance beneficial to both. There had arisen serious causes of dispute, and since Souillac professed friendship for both parties, Nana Phadnavis sought to explain to him the Maratha grievances against Tipu and to justify the adoption of military measures unless Tipu gave up his aggressive designs.[2] On the rumour that Souillac intended to pay a visit to the Malabar Coast towards the end of 1785, Nana Phadnavis also sent Montigny to Goa on a special mission to explain the Maratha views to him. Souillac did not ultimately go to the Malabar Coast, but the views of the Poona Government were fully explained by Montigny in a letter to him, dated 30th November 1785.[1] It was an important political despatch and deserves a somewhat detailed analysis. It dealt with three principal matters,—the causes of the conflict between Tipu and the Marathas and Nizam Ali; the reasons which had compelled the Marathas to conclude peace with the English; and the difficulty of preserving a coalition of Indian Powers during a period of peace.

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[1] P. A. ms. 838.

[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 871.

Montigny wrote, "The object of the Regency in deputing me to you, Monsieur le Vicomte, was to inform you on its behalf as also on behalf of Nizam Ali ...... of the just motives which had determined it to take up arms against Tipu ...... and to give you at the same time a proof of its moderation and the special desire it has to agree to your views about the maintenance of harmony among the Princes of India". Montigny continued that when he came to know that Souillac would not come to the Malabar Coast, he sent to Nana Phadnavis and Hari Pant Phadke some extracts from Souillac's despatch of 4th October, "the most appropriate to show to the Regency your earnest desire to see the differences arisen between it and Tipu removed, as also the pressing exhortations you have made to that Nawab to unite himself with the Marathas on terms which may be reciprocally useful." Regarding the fear of the Marathas that the French would give military help to Tipu against them, Montigny wrote: "I laid great stress on your intention not to send any help to Tipu ....; that the orders of the King had an express stipulation that the French were not to mix themselves up in the divisions which might arise among the Indian Princes, except only to re-establish peace and unity among them; that never at a moment of rupture between two Powers, whose alliance and support we sought, would we furnish means to one against the other ....; that moreover the Regency ought to be assured that our relations with Tipu were of a nature which could not be contradictory to those we were seeking to form with the Marathas."

Montigny hoped that the assurance given by Souillac would have a salutary effect on Nana Phadnavis, but he feared that if Tipu did not desist from aggression, the Marathas and the Nizam would be forced to resort to arms against him. For the threatened conflict Montigny put the entire blame on Tipu. "The letter which Tipu has written to you in the form of a manifesto to justify his enterprises against the place of Nargounde, belonging to a friend and ally of the Regency, is only an attempt to colour the injustice of his conduct.......... Tipu is carrying to excess all the wicked qualities of his father without having many, nearly all, of his virtues. It is the opinion of the whole of India about this Nawab, and our nation will also know it, perhaps too late."

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[1] P. A. ms. 5356.

Montigny next referred to the main ground of French prejudice against the Marathas, namely their inactivity during the last Anglo-French struggle and conclusion of peace with the English at a time when they were making overtures to the French for an alliance. While condemning the policy of the Marathas and declaring that if they had looked far ahead and had worked in the interest of India as a whole, there would have been a great revolution in the country against the English, Montigny admitted that there were very strong reasons to induce them to conclude peace. "I am quite convinced, Monsieur le Vicomte, that if the Marathas as also Nizam Ali had moved in their respective spheres against the English while we attacked the latter on the Coromandel Coast in concert with Haidar Ali, this general and combined attack would have created a great revolution and forced the English to fight on all fronts. I even think that India would have been able to recover her freedom completely if the French had had the time and the means to take Bombay or Madras before the arrival of the news of peace." But, Montigny added, the inaction of the Marathas would "cause you less surprise when you notice that at this time the English had made the greatest sacrifice in their favour by restoring to them all the territories they had conquered........and that they had added to these great advantages the abandonment of the person of Raghoba to the Regency of Poona.........What more remained for the Marathas to desire? Nothing but the humiliation of the Nawab (of Mysore), whose ambition and tyranny became formidable to them as also to the Souba (the Nizam), and most particularly because they knew him to be supported by a French army. Undoubtedly, it would have been desirable if the Marathas had sacrificed their own interests......to the greater one, the prospect of the general libertion of India; but where is that Asiatic Power which is capable of making such a sacrifice for distant prospects, for uncertain successes?" The increase of Haidar's power, the defection of Nizam Ali from the coalition against the English, and the outbreak of dissensions among the Maratha Chiefs were very strong inducements for Nana Phadnavis to conclude peace with the English.

Montigny next referred to the general attitude of the Marathas in the matter of co-operating with the French against the English, as proposed by Souillac in his despatch, and the difficulty of maintaining a coalition of Indian Powers during a period of peace. He wrote, "Nana Phadnavis is always in the same disposition with respect to the English, whom he greatly detests. In fact, can he ever forget that they did everything possible in order to drive him from the important place he occupies?" But, he continued, the Poona Government would not entertain any fresh proposal of alliance with France until it had received a reply to the one made in 1782, and which, as Bussy had informed Nana, had been forwarded to the King of France for his approval. In view of this attitude Montigny thought it to be "very difficult to induce the Marathas to conclude a treaty concerning the general plan of union proposed in your last despatch, as also the special one of union between Sindhia and the Regency, particularly in the existing circumstances."

Montigny added that on his return to Poona he would make further overtures to the Maratha Government as proposed by Souillac. "As for the project of persuading the Regency to send a corps of army to Bengal by way of Katek in concert with the Raja of Nagpur and joined with our troops landed in that part, nothing could be more in the designs of the Court of Poona, because it itself had expressed the most earnest desire about such a move by Article 19 of the Treaty it had proposed in 1782 and to which no reply has yet been given ..... I may say that if the Marathas had already suggested this expedition in 1782, as it is well-known from their proposals, they are today in a better position than ever to execute this grand project because of the elevation of Sindhia to the generalship of the Empire. The Raja of Nagpur will enter with difficulty into the arrangement, unless he is sure of a very imminent rupture between France and England. He has much to fear from the English by the proximity of his country of Katek to the possessions of the Company." Moreover, he was so closely watched by the Council of Calcutta that it was impossible to make the least move without the English being informed about it.

Montigny concluded: "Nizam Ali, although under nearly the same inquisition, will be less difficult to persuade. Whatever it may be, I consider it as very difficult to induce in advance, during a time of peace, the majority of the Princes of India to accept the project of a union such as might be turned into a general coalition against the common enemy. The fear which they have about the English power, the uncertainty of a rupture (between France and England), and the interval between now and the outbreak of a new war suspend the effect of their resentment and restrain them to a state of the greatest circumspection. They promise, and will promise, to make common cause while we would come with impressive forces capable of operating on a large scale; but till then it will be very difficult to persuade them to make solid agreements with us. That is at least what I have grounds to think, from the knowledge which I have been able to procure about the policies of the *Darbars*."

From 1785 to 1787 Franco-Maratha relations centred on the conflict between the Marathas and Tipu. Souillac and, following him, Cossigny counselled patience and moderation to both sides in the interest of the final objective of keeping the Indian Powers united till the outbreak of the next Anglo-French war. But their efforts were in vain, and in December 1785 the Marathas, in alliance with Nizam Ali, started hostilities against Tipu. Cossigny then tried to convince the Poona Government that the French were determined to observe strict neutrality and gave repeated assurances that they would not lend any military assistance to Tipu. He even offered his good offices to bring about a peace settlement and sent a special envoy named Godard for the purpose. But nothing could wholly dispel the misgivings of the Marathas, who still believed that the French looked upon Tipu with a special eye of favour. Since Tipu was their worst enemy, they gradually drew away from the French and walked into the orbit of the English, as became quite evident in 1790 when they entered into an offensive and defensive alliance with the English against Tipu.

In December 1785 Cossigny wrote to Nana Phadnavis, informing him of his assumption of office as Governor of Pondicherry and acknowledging receipt of his letter to Souillac in which he had explained the Maratha grievances against Tipu. Cossigny advised a policy of moderation and compromise in the larger interest, and stated (what had become a stock expression in French diplomatic correspondence with the country Powers) that it was the intention of the King of France to send another large expeditionary force to India on the next favourable occasion in order to liberate the country Powers from the yoke of the English.[1] On the news of the outbreak of war between the Marathas and Tipu, Cossigny expressed his deep concern in a letter to Montigny, dated 8th March 1786. He informed Montigny that he had already written to Nana in the same strain as Souillac's letter of October 1785, that "the English would one day take advantage of the disunion among the Princes of the country. If the Marathas, Nizam Ali and Tipu had been less concerned about their temporary interests, they would have been able to keep their eyes fixed on the increasing power of the English." Cossigny knew that the English had sent an envoy named Malet to Poona, but that they had not accepted the proposal made by Nana for joining the coalition against Tipu. He believed that the English were "undoubtedly quite content with the injury the Princes of the country are inflicting on one another."[2]

In order to pacify the conflict Cossigny sent a military officer named Godard on a special mission to Poona in August 1786. Godard's mission, however, proved fruitless, and in November he returned to Pondicherry, with a letter from Nana Phadnavis addressed to Souillac, presumably in reply to Souillac's letter of October 1785.[3] In October Cossigny wrote to Montigny, urging him to exert his diplomatic ability to the fullest extent to destroy the English plan of exploiting the division among the Indian Princes and to try to bring the latter into a union against their common enemy.[1] In December Cossigny wrote to Montigny again, informing him that he had sent a letter to Nana Phadnavis offering his good offices to bring about peace between the Marathas and Tipu.[2] The Poona Government had earlier made overtures to Cossigny for French help through its *Wakil* at Pondicherry named Gopal Rao. Cossigny repeated his offer to mediate. He wrote to Nana Phadnavis again on January 5, 1787, urging him to conclude peace with Tipu. He stated that the English and the French had pledged themselves by the Treaty of Versailles not to give military help to any Indian Power. If, however, the English gave help to Nizam Ali in his war against Tipu, France had adequate forces to compel them to respect the treaty conditions.[3]

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[1] P. A. ms. 871.

[2] *Ibid.* ms. 894.

[3] *Ibid.*, ms. 938 (Cossigny to Montigny, 1st December 1786).

In spite of the fact that peace was concluded in 1787, an event in which the part played by the French was not very evident, the Marathas were not much persuaded to believe in their professions of friendship, specially when shortly after they found Tipu sending an embassy to France to draw closer his relations with that country. Another cause of bitterness between the French and the Marathas arose from the depredations by Maratha pirates on French shipping on the Malabar Coast, for which the French sent sharp warnings to the Poona Government, although the latter was not in reality directly responsible. One such notable incident was the capture of the *Adelaide* in 1786. The captain of the ship, Dayot, a cousin of Madame Cossigny, and four other officers were held to ransom. Cossigny wrote to Montigny to demand compensation from the Poona Government for the outrage, and, in case of refusal, to warn Nana Phadnavis about the presence of six French warships in Indian waters.[4] The matter, however, dragged on for years before satisfaction could be obtained.[5] That the depredations of Maratha pirates continued becomes evident from a letter dated 14th March 1792 sent by the Pondicherry Assembly to the National Assembly in France, which complained about Maratha piracy and urged the need of a French naval station on the Malabar Coast.[1]

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[1] P. A. ms. 924.

[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 944.

[3] *Ibid.*, mss. 951, 952.

[4] *Ibid.*, ms. 907 (Cossigny to Montigny, 15th April, 1786).

[5] P. A. ms. 983 (Cossigny to Marin at Mahé, 11th May 1787), ms. 984 (Cossigny to Montigny, 26th May), ms. 999 (Cossigny to Montigny, 6th August), ms. 1006 (decisions of the Advisory Committee at Pondicherry, September 1788).

Regular diplomatic relations between the French and the Marathas came to an end with the recall of Montigny from Poona in May 1788, following the receipt of the despatch of Castries of February 1787.[2] It is a pity that very little is known about Montigny's diplomatic work from the date of his last letter, written to Souillac in November 1785, to the middle of 1788, when his mission at Poona suddenly terminated and he returned to Pondicherry. His own correspondence came to an abrupt end, and the records of Paris and Pondicherry Archives help us little to lift the curtain of oblivion. In his *Bussy et L'Inde Française,* Martineau states that some time before the death of Bussy (January 1785) Montigny went on a diplomatic mission to Delhi and Hyderabad. But there is nothing in Montigny's correspondence or any other document to corroborate it. On the other hand, from the last letter of Montigny it appears that he had proposed visiting the different *Darbars* of India, but had not received any orders from Pondicherry down to the end of 1785. In Michaud's *Biographie Universelle* it is stated that while at Poona Montigny received the title of Nawab from the Mughal Emperor in 1785. It is not known on what source this statement is based, but there is nothing to support it in the available correspondence of Montigny. From Michaud again we learn that in 1788 Montigny was sent on a diplomatic mission to Hyderabad. It is not possible to ascertain the object of the mission or the period of his stay at Hyderabad, since available records do not throw any light on the subject. All that can be gathered, and that from the correspondence of a French officer in Maratha service named Montreau, is that Montigny was suddenly recalled to Pondicherry by the orders of the Minister of Marine and Colonies, and that he left Poona at the end of May 1788.[3] He travelled via Hyderabad, where he halted for a few days, and reached Pondicherry about the middle of August. From Montreau's correspondence we also learn that Montigny was in great financial distress at the time of leaving Poona and borrowed a large sum of money from Montreau, which remained unpaid even after Montigny's return to France in 1791.

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[1] P. A. ms. 1674.

[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 960.

[3] Reg. 26(7)—*Inventaire des Anciennes Archives de l'Inde Française,* Pondicherry.

Not much need be said here about the value of Montigny's diplomatic work at Poona. For years he strove earnestly to bring about a close alliance between the French and the Marathas, which, if it had materialised, might have given a different shape to the later course of events. He had his critics, and Bussy roundly called him a dupe of the Poona Government; but even his bitterest critic admitted that he was not an adventurer of the type of Saint-Lubin, but had honesty of purpose and a genuine spirit of patriotism.

IV. *Relations with Nizam Ali.*

Although Montigny came to India in 1781 as the French representative accredited to the Poona *Darbar*, his mission also included maintenance of relations with Nizam Ali and the Mughal Emperor, and we have already noticed how he kept himself in touch with the *Darbars* of Delhi and Hyderabad. In 1785 Aumont,[1] one of the French officers in the service of Nizam Ali, gained the confidence of Cossigny, Governor of Pondicherry, and was appointed by him special diplomatic agent at the *Darbar* of Hyderabad. He retained his post as an officer in the service of Nizam Ali, but received nonetheless a regular allowance from the Pondicherry Government for working as French agent at Hyderabad. Aumont seems to have gained some influence over Nizam Ali and Mushir-ul-Mulk, his *Diwan*. In 1787 he was sent to Pondicherry with the ostensible purpose of repairing the Nizam's jewels, but perhaps it covered some political object.[2] Anyway, in October 1787 we find Aumont writing from Pondicherry to Nizam Ali and to his

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[1] For earlier career see Chapter V (sections on Madec and Modave).

[2] Bengal Secret and Separate Proceedings, 29th October 1787 in C. R. O. —*The French in India* Series, Vol. XI, pp. 320-323—about Aumont's visit to Pondicherry and exchange of letters between Nizam Ali and de Cossigny, September 1787.

Diwan, Mushir-ul-Mulk, that he would return to Hyderabad as soon as repairs to the jewels had been completed, and Conway, the new Governor of Pondicherry, had received news from Europe.[1] It may be recalled that in 1787 there were rumours of the possibility of a renewal of Anglo-French hostilities in Europe over the sudden turn of developments in Holland. We also find Aumont praying to the new Governor, Conway, for retention in the post of French Resident at the Court of Hyderabad, and begging him to pay the charges for repairs to the Nizam's jewels as a friendly gesture.[2]

Conway, who succeeded Cossigny as Governor of Pondicherry in September 1787, wrote to Nizam Ali in October, assuring him of the continuance of the closest friendship that had always existed between France and the House of Nizam-ul-Mulk.[3] It is not known definitely how Conway received Aumont's professions of loyalty and service to the nation. But from a letter written by Nizam Ali to Conway some time later, it appears that the latter had a positive suspicion against Aumont and had written to Nizam Ali to keep strict watch on him. Conway had further expressed his intention to send somebody else shortly to work as French representative at Hyderabad.[4] There is no means of knowing why Aumont fell into the bad grace of Conway, nor does it appear that the Pondicherry Government actually appointed somebody else as official representative at Hyderabad. On the other hand, later contact between Pondicherry and Hyderabad was maintained through two other officers in the service of Nizam Ali, Raymond and Piron, as we shall notice presently.

In spite of the dislike of Conway, Aumont, who went back to Hyderabad early in 1788, still continued to work for some time as intermediary between the Pondicherry Government and the *Darbar* of Nizam Ali. In September 1788 while forwarding a letter from Nizam Ali to the French Governor, Aumont wrote that he still remained a good patriot and was always ready to place himself at the disposal of Conway to supply him news of everything that happened at the Court of Hyderabad. He then gave an account of the arrival some time back of an English agent from Calcutta and of the grand reception accorded to him.[1] Although the object of the visit was kept a close secret, Aumont could learn from reliable sources that it was to procure the cession of the Sarkar of Guntoor and to persuade Nizam Ali to join the English in a coalition against Tipu. Aumont thought that the mission had little chance of success. "The English would not succeed here as easily as among the Marathas. It is not that there is less greed for money here than among the Marathas. The real reason is that Mughal indolence has no liking for the risks and fatigues of war, in contrast to the love for pillage among the Marathas, a nation of born brigands."[2] Aumont's prediction was, however, totally falsified. Nizam Ali did cede Guntoor under English pressure and did join the war against Tipu two years later.

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[1] P. A. mss. 1008, 1019.

[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 1017 (letter dated 20th October 1787).

[3] *Ibid.*, mss. 1015, 1019.

[4] Martineau—*Lettres et Conventions des Gouverneurs de Pondichéry*, pp. 339-340.

Aumont was mortified at French inactivity to prevent Nizam Ali from entering into a close alliance with the English in 1790, which seemed to presage the loss of what little influence the French still had in Hyderabad. He gave expression to his feelings in a letter to de Fresne, Governor of Pondicherry, in September 1790, after getting news of the Revolution in France and the effect it had produced at Pondicherry. He wrote that he had received de Fresne's letter sent through one Bellevue, who had come to Hyderabad in search of employment. He doubted very much whether Bellevue would get any appointment, since the situation in Hyderabad had changed completely for the French, and the Government was not anxious to increase the number of Frenchmen in its service. Indeed, if the *Diwan* had had his own way, all the existing Frenchmen would have been dismissed, but he was held in restraint only by Nizam Ali who had still some liking for the French. Aumont continued that the English were trying to exploit the news of the Revolution in France to discredit that country in the eyes of the

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[1] It referred to the mission of Captain Kennaway; see Forrest—*Selections from the State Papers of the Governors-General of India, Cornwallis,* I, pp. 35-36.

[2] P. A. mss. 5252 (Aumont's account of the reception given to the English embassy by the Nizam), 5253 (Aumont to Conway, 3rd September 1788).

Indian Princes, but he hoped that the National Assembly would pay more attention to India than the ministers of the old regime, who had lost for France the high esteem which India originally had for her. Hoping a revival of French influence in India as a result of the Revolution, he wrote, "I am too old to see the return of the French to this brilliant theatre, but I am nevertheless always optimistic. I console myself with the belief that a change of system will give France her original lustre."[1]

About the time that the English were trying to secure Guntoor from Nizam Ali, there was an informal overture from the latter to cede the district to the French, in exchange for a guarantee of protection against the English and Tipu. It may be remembered that in May 1788 Montigny was recalled from Poona, and on his way to Pondicherry he made a brief halt at Hyderabad. It was through Montigny that Nizam Ali made an informal and verbal proposal about the cession of Guntoor. Montigny reported it to Conway on his arrival at Pondicherry, and the matter was referred to the Advisory Committee, set up in 1787 to assist the Governor. In view of the existing situation of the French, however, the Advisory Committee recommended in September 1788 the adoption of a non-committal policy, and asked Conway to write a simple letter of compliments to Nizam Ali in reply to his proposal without undertaking any definite engagement.[2] No wonder that soon after Nizam Ali, in order to secure his territories from Tipu's aggression, ceded Guntoor to the English and entered into a close understanding with them.

Baffled in his attempts to gain French protection or to secure the alliance of Tipu, for which overtures were made in 1788[3], Nizam Ali finally turned to the English and entered into an offensive and defensive alliance in July 1790. But although he joined the war against Tipu, he was not very happy about his connection with the English. During the progress of the war he realised that the destruction of Tipu would merely increase the power of the English and enable them to subdue the other states, including their allies. Thus towards the end of 1791 he turned once more to the French and tried to get from them European troops and arms in order to be independent of English military assistance for the protection of his territories, which had forced him into the war. He had in his service a number of French officers, and it was through them that he opened overtures to Pondicherry. One of them was Raymond, who later acquired great reputation and influence in Hyderabad, somewhat recalling the days of Bussy in the Deccan. Another notable person was Piron, who later succeeded Raymond in command of his contingent after the latter's death in 1798.[1]

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[1] P. A. ms. 5254 (letter dated 18th September 1790).
[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 1006 (Proceedings of the Advisory Committee).
[3] Wilks—*History of Mysoor*, II, pp. 334-335.

Raymond, who had fought in the French expeditionary force during the previous war and had joined the service of Nizam Ali in 1785, opened his first political contact with the Pondicherry Government towards the end of 1787. In a letter dated 1st December he introduced himself to Conway, then Governor of Pondicherry, giving an account of his earlier career and the strength of the contingent under his command. He pledged his loyalty to France and expressed his readiness to supply to the Pondicherry Government all news about Hyderabad.[2] For a time this did not lead to any important development. But from the end of 1791 the two French officers, Raymond and Piron, became actively engaged in negotiations with the Pondicherry Government for procuring troops and arms. It was at the instance of Nizam Ali, who was anxious to draw away from the English alliance, that Raymond entered into correspondence with the Governor of Pondicherry. Writing to de Fresne on the 29th December 1791, Raymond gave an account of the state of war against Tipu since the withdrawal of the English from Seringapatam in June and the unwillingness of the Marathas and Nizam Ali to continue the war any longer. They had become conscious of the dangers that eventually threatened them from the side of the English if Tipu was completely crushed, and they were thus anxious to conclude an early peace. Raymond stated that he was sending the letter through Piron, who was going to Pondicherry on a special mission.[1] Piron's departure for Pondicherry was held up for a few days, and taking advantage of this delay Raymond wrote a second letter to de Fresne on the 3rd January 1792, giving further news of the war and particularly of the defeat of the Nizam's army before Goorumconda, in which several French officers were taken prisoners.[2]

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[1] For careers see Compton—*European Military Adventurers of Hindustan*; Malleson—*Final French Struggles in India and on the Indian Seas;* Besson—*Les Adventuriers Français aux Indes.*

[2] P. A. ms. 5251.

It was on the 12th January 1792 that Raymond made his definite proposal to de Fresne.[3] He wrote that Nizam Ali had asked him to increase the number of troops under his command, to a strength sufficient to enable him to dispense with the contingent placed at his disposal by the English, and to seek the help of the Pondicherry Government for the purpose. Raymond urged de Fresne to consider the proposal as a great opportunity for the French nation, assuring him that "Nizam Ali has been attached to the French since his boyhood and that he will never be their enemy to help a Power whose ambition has given him just ground for distrust." At the moment he had allied himself with the English against Tipu, but that was only for taking revenge on the ruler of Mysore for the capture and destruction of Adoni in 1786.[4]

Raymond then continued that if by supplying troops and guns France helped the formation of a contingent of 10,000 men in the service of Nizam Ali, it would be as good as being at her own disposal. At the first signal from Pondicherry, it would move to any quarter indicated, possibly strengthened by additional troops lent by Nizam Ali. Raymond explained that by his contract with Nizam Ali, he was the master of the troops under his command together with their arms and baggages, and was at liberty to dispose of them in any way he liked in case of a European war. He then outlined a plan of campaign for the next war with the English. His troops would move immediately on the outbreak of war and occupy the Northern Sarkars, which would greatly facilitate French operations on the Coromandel Coast. Nizam Ali could be drawn over to the side of the French by assuring him of protection from Tipu's aggression, and Tipu being an ally, such a guarantee would not create any difficulty. The only condition that Nizam Ali would require for an alliance with the French was the restoration of the Northern Sarkars. Raymond concluded that considering the existing political situation the French Government would do well in helping him to augment his corps, as desired by Nizam Ali. It would not cost the French any money; all that was required was to supply guns and enterprising officers, of whom there were many in the different settlements in India.

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[1] P. A. ms. 1563. Both Raymond and Piron had taken part in the war, and fragments of the *Journal* of their campaigns are preserved in the Pondicherry Archives (ms. 1569).

[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 5255. About the engagement at Goorrumconda see also Wilks—*History of Mysoor*, II, pp, 515-516.

[3] P. A. ms. 5256.

[4] It was in July; Wilks, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 296-298.

De Fresne was favourably disposed towards the proposal of Raymond. While forwarding Raymond's letter to the Minister of Marine on the 5th March 1792, de Fresne expressed his high appreciation of the integrity and military qualities of Raymond. He emphasised the assurance given by Raymond, to leave the service of Nizam Ali and place his contingent at the disposal of the French Government immediately on the outbreak of a war with the English. He also confirmed the view of Raymond that Nizam Ali was well-disposed towards the French, and stated that the tremendous growth of English power after the victory over Tipu had made Nizam Ali all the more inclined towards the French. While recommending the acceptance of Raymond's proposal, de Fresne pointed out that it would not cause any embarrassment to the French Government and would not disturb peace with the English, since there was to be no direct negotiation with Nizam Ali. Outwardly, the French Government would be merely permitting sale of arms to Raymond and allowing army officers to join his contingent. There were both plenty of arms at Pondicherry and a large number of men in the different settlements anxious to seek good careers in the service of the Indian Princes.[1] So favourably disposed was de Fresne to the idea of having a French contingent in the service of Nizam Ali that a few days later he recommended to the Minister the award of a Cross of

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[1] P. A. ms. 1657.

St. Louis to Piron, who had come to Pondicherry for negotiations.

Raymond repeated his prayer for arms and officers in two letters to de Fresne, written from Seringapatam on March 6. Hoping for a successful outcome of Piron's mission, he wrote that after the latter's return he himself would go to Pondicherry to negotiate about more important affairs on behalf of Nizam Ali. Raymond informed de Fresne of the conclusion of peace between Tipu and the allied Powers, and expressed great admiration for the courage and tenacity of the Mysore army. He defended himself against the charge of disloyalty, for fighting against Tipu, an ally of France, and for taking in his employ deserters from the French contingent in Tipu's service commanded by de Vigie, after the latter's defeat and capture before Seringapatam on the 8th February. Regarding the second charge, Raymond contended that the deserters had left Vigie's contingent because of low salary and bad treatment; and regarding the first, he stated that the honour of a soldier and gratitude towards an employer had compelled him to take part in the war, but that he had seized every opportunity to urge upon Nizam Ali the necessity of concluding peace, and to impress upon him the danger that threatened his own power after the total destruction of Tipu.[1] On the 13th March Raymond wrote to de Fresne again, informing him about an interview he had with Nizam Ali. The latter was anxious to know the result of Piron's mission. He proposed to Raymond to raise a second contingent and to procure additional arms for the purpose from Pondicherry. Raymond once more urged de Fresne to seize the great opportunity for promoting national interests.[2]

There is a gap in the correspondence of Raymond preserved in the Pondicherry Archives, and it is not known definitely what reply de Fresne gave to his prayer for men and arms. It appears, however, from some later correspondence that de Fresne was quite willing to accommodate Raymond in an indirect way. Desertions became suddenly frequent among the men of the Pondicherry garrison, and in a letter written in June 1792 to the Governor-General, Cossigny, de Fresne stated that the desertions at Pondicherry were connected with the recruitment started by Raymond.[1] Piron returned to Hyderabad in July, after having made an arrangement with de Fresne about the supply of arms and other equipments through Mercier, a wealthy private merchant, formerly a Government officer.

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[1] P. A. mss. 5302, 5303.

[2] *Ibid*, ms. 5304.

In July 1792 Raymond informed de Fresne about the panic created in the Deccan by the sudden appearance of the powerful Maratha chief, Sindhia, with a formidable army, as a result of which Nizam Ali had pressed his demand on Raymond to increase his corps immediately. Raymond stated that he had already recruited 8,000 sepoys and had sent 20,000 rupees to Mercier for arms and uniforms. He had authorised Mercier to procure them, if necessary, from Negapatam or Madras.[2] In a letter dated 1st October Raymond informed de Fresne that at the demand of Nizam Ali he was raising another sepoy force of 5,000 men, and had sent 50,000 rupees through his adjutant, Chemith, to Mercier for procuring additional arms and uniforms. He further stated that he was sending a letter from Nizam Ali relating to a long-cherished political project, about which he would write in detail later.[3] Unfortunately, the letter of Nizam Ali is not preserved in the Pondicherry Archives. Perhaps, it might have referred to the old project of an alliance. Raymond added that he had been authorised to go to Pondicherry and enter into negotiations as soon as Sindhia returned to north India.

About this time Raymond received news from his agent at Pondicherry, Chemith, that de Fresne had changed his mind and was unwilling to supply arms according to the previous arrangement, out of suspicion about his intentions. In a letter dated 4th October, Raymond regretted that de Fresne's ears had been poisoned by some persons, and declared that he was prepared to go to Pondicherry and answer any charge that might have been brought against him. He wrote, "Would I have addressed you, my General, with so much confidence if I had wanted to deceive you?" Raymond added that his enemies

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[1] P. A. ms. 1775.

[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 5257.

[3] *Ibid.*, ms. 5258.

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had done him a great injury, not so much by stopping the supply of arms as by depriving him of the good opinion of de Fresne.[1] Shortly after, Raymond received a letter from de Fresne, explaining the reason which prevented the latter from keeping his promise. It referred to the changed situation at Pondicherry and the coming of the Civil Commissioners from France.[2] Anyway, Raymond was satisfied with the explanation.

The matter was allowed to rest there for the time being, but was taken up once more in June 1793. Before that de Fresne had been succeeded by Chermont as Governor of Pondicherry. The latter had written to Nizam Ali and Raymond, informing them of his assumption of office. In reply to that letter, Nizam Ali wrote on the 1st June 1793, assuring Chermont of the continuance of his friendship for France, and expressing a fervent hope that his old request for arms and other military equipments, made to the previous Governor, would receive more favourable consideration from him. He added that he had entrusted Raymond to write in detail about the things needed, and hoped that it would be possible for Chermont to send them at the earliest opportunity.[3] On the same date Raymond also wrote to Chermont, renewing his request for arms and other equipments and assuring him that in case of need his contingent would be entirely at the disposal of France.[4] By the time these letters reached Chermont, the condition of Pondicherry itself had become desperate on account of the outbreak of war with the English, and there could be no question of supplying arms to Hyderabad. On the 25th June Chermont wrote to Nizam Ali, informing him of the sudden change in the situation which prevented him from keeping his request for arms, having need of all the available resources for the defence of Pondicherry itself. He, however, assured Nizam Ali that he was expecting strong reinforcements from France, and on their arrival he would be in a position to give a more tangible proof of his friendship for the Nizam.[5] It was, in

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[1] P. A. ms. 5259. [2] *Ibid*, ms. 5260.

[3] Martineau—*Lettres et Conventions des Gouverneurs de Pondichérry*, p. 398.

[4] P. A. ms. 5262.

[5] Martineau, *op. cit.*, p. 400.

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fact, just a pious wish, and shortly after Pondicherry capitulated to the English.

V. *Relations with Mysore.*

There was a general feeling among the French that the ruler of Mysore was their traditional, and in fact natural, ally in India. That impression originated from the time of Haidar's first co-operation with the French, while he was still an unknown soldier in the service of the Hindu ruler of Mysore. It was strengthened when Haidar came to power, his rise being to some extent due to the help rendered by the French, and more particularly to the military lessons he had learnt from them. After 1765 the factor that kept up the feeling of friendship between Haidar and the French was their common animosity towards the English. As we have noticed already, nearly all the French *mémoires* of the period dealing with military operations in India envisaged a close alliance and co-operation with Haidar. That alliance was, however, sought to be based on too fragile a foundation, and not on a real political understanding and unity of interests. While professing friendship and co-operation, each side was in reality anxious to make use of the other for its own advantage. While the French were principally concerned with the destruction of the English power and sought for that purpose the co-operation of the three southern Powers, the Marathas, Hyderabad and Mysore, which necessitated some check on the ambitions of the last, the ruler of Mysore was more concerned about the aggrandisement of his own power and was eager to utilise the friendship of the French not merely against the English but also against the other two Indian Powers, the Marathas and Hyderabad. We have already noticed how during the war of 1779-83 many fair chances of success were lost for the French and Haidar because of lack of trust and co-operation between them, which gradually deepened into bitter relations, scarcely concealed. Tipu was even less enthusiastic about the friendship of the French and less willing to conciliate their feelings than his father. What he wanted was not so much a general alliance with France as a corps of French troops in his service, to be retained as long as it suited his interests.

During the period under review Tipu's relations with the French presented a striking contradiction. While on the one hand, he showed an eagerness for drawing closer to France, addressed several letters direct to Louis XVI with presents for him and Marie Antoinette, sent an embassy to Paris in 1787 and proposed sending another in 1792, in his relations with the French in India he showed little eagerness to win their goodwill or even to avoid measures likely to alienate them. As we have noticed already, his agents gave repeated vexations to the French at Mahé, and all the protests of the Commandant of Mahé and the Governor of Pondicherry proved of no avail. French goods and letters passing through Tipu's territories were constantly intercepted, and the land communication between Pondicherry and Mahé was virtually cut off. Obviously such dealings were not calculated to establish friendly relations.

After the conclusion of peace in 1783, the policy of the French was to cultivate good relations with Tipu, Nizam Ali and the Marathas, and to try to keep them united for a future eventuality of war with the English. For that purpose it was necessary to eliminate all causes of friction among the three Powers and to preserve harmony by an appeal to their long-term interests. That policy, however, was frustrated when towards the end of 1785 war broke out between Tipu and a combination of the Marathas and Nizam Ali. All the three Powers had expressed their views and explained their motives to the French Governor, Souillac, but the appeals of the latter could not prevent hostilities breaking out. All that the French could do was to make known to the contestants their neutrality in the conflict, but there persisted an impression among the enemies of Tipu that the French were really in sympathy with him. That impression arose from the existence of a French contingent in Tipu's service, commanded by de Lallée, and also from the outward anxiety shown by Tipu to draw closer his relations with France.

Early in 1786 Tipu addressed a letter to Louis XVI, expressing a fervent hope that the traditional friendship between Mysore and France would continue, in spite of all the efforts made by their enemies to destroy it. He bestowed high praise on Cossigny, Governor of Pondicherry, for his efforts to preserve friendly relations, wanted him not to be transferred from Pondicherry, and even recommended him for promotion to the rank of Lieutenant-General.[1] It may be recalled that after the conclusion of hostilities in 1783, Tipu had accused this same Cossigny, then commanding the French troops placed at his disposal, of cheating and embezzlement and had sent charges against him to Bussy, who considered them to be unfounded. In 1786 Tipu had need of French goodwill, and that explained his change of attitude. In his letter to Louis XVI Tipu also announced the birth of a son and sent him presents, which included a gun manufactured in his own foundry. The eagerness of Tipu to maintain good relations with the French was also manifest by the orders he sent to his officers to stop giving troubles to the citizens of Mahé[2], and by the successful conclusion of the mission of Monneron sent to his *Darbar* for the settlement of all outstanding disputes between him and the French, including the account of the advances made by him to the French expeditionary force before the arrival of Bussy.[3]

The apparent improvement of relations in 1786 prepared the ground for the next step, the despatch of an official embassy to Paris in 1787. That was in fact the first instance of sending a formal embassy by an Indian Prince to a European Power. The real object of the embassy is not quite clear. It seems, however, that the intention was not so much to enter into a definite military alliance with France, which, Tipu must have known from past experience, could not be reached so easily, but rather to impress upon his enemies in India, the English, the Marathas and Nizam Ali, that he was on terms of closest friendship with a strong European Power. If it had been his object to secure a definite military alliance with France, he would have surely prepared the ground by holding preliminary discussions with the Governor of Pondicherry or the Governor-General in the Isle of France. It does not appear from the correspondence of either Cossigny or Souillac that such discussions had been proposed by Tipu. Anyway, Tipu's embassy headed by one Muhammad Osman Khan started from

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[1] P. A. ms. 878.

[2] *Ibid*, ms. 937.

[3] *Ibid*, ms. 941 (Cossigny to Marin at Mahé, 1st December 1786).

Mangalore, with a large retinue and rich presents, by a French corvette, the *Aurore,* towards the end of 1787. Pierre Monneron, the captain of the ship, had special instructions from Souillac to proceed straight to France without stopping anywhere on the way, and while approaching the French coast to hoist the flag of Tipu.[1] Michaud in his *Histoire des Progrés et de la Chûte de l'Empire de Mysore* gives a brief account of the reception of the embassy in Paris and of the result of the mission.[2] The King gave a public audience to the embassy on the 3rd August 1788. Spectacular shows, banquets and other entertainments were arranged in honour of the distinguished visitors, and even de Suffren held a reception at his residence.[3]

If the mission had any real political object, it proved to be entirely fruitless. The French Government, standing on the eve of the great storm which was to burst a few months later, was not prepared to make any military commitments at the time. But the presence of Tipu's embassy in Paris was sought to be utilised by the French Company for its own advantage. As early as 1785 de Moracin, the Administrator in India of the newly established French Company, had submitted a *mémoire* to Souillac on the possibilities of French trade with Mysore.[4] In 1788 the French Company sought to take advantage of the presence of Tipu's embassy in Paris to propose a Commercial Convention, by which the Company would secure a monopoly of all exports from Tipu's kingdom and of all imports of European goods, and in return it would supply to Tipu guns and other arms as well as French artisans that he might require. The proposals, dated 4th October 1788, submitted to Tipu through his Ambassadors, stated that the French would purchase every year the entire produce of pepper of his territories and fixed quantities of sandalwood, cardamom, gum, elephant tusks, raw cotton, yarn and woven cloth, and would supply in return all the guns and munitions of war required by Tipu as well as other European goods. The proposals were accompanied by a letter of the same date from the

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[1] P. A. ms. 996.

[2] Vol. I, pp. 138-139.

[3] Roux—*Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde*, p. 228. For a detailed account of the embassy see Tantet—*L'Ambassade de Tippou Sahib à Paris.*

[4] P. A. ms. 5297.

Administrators of the Company to Tipu, and another letter, dated 10th October, which stated that at the request of the Ambassadors the Company had advanced money to them to recruit artisans in France to be taken to India.[1] The Ambassadors also secured the services of a French physician and a French surgeon, Willemet and Barrout.[2] The embassy returned to India about the middle of 1789. It may be mentioned here that the proposed Commercial Convention did not materialise, and the French artisans who accompanied the Ambassadors to Mysore did not receive very good treatment either. Some time later the Governor of Pondicherry had to intercede in favour of these unfortunate men, and to protest to Tipu against the restrictions imposed on their freedom of communication with Pondicherry, in violation of the engagements entered into with them.[3]

While Tipu had expressed his desire to send an embassy to Paris, the French also decided to maintain a regular diplomatic agent at his *Darbar.* During the last war Piveron de Morlat had worked as French agent, returning to France after the cessation of hostilities. In April 1787 Castries wrote to Cossigny at Pondicherry that Piveron de Morlat would be sent back to resume his post at Tipu's *Darbar*[4], and in September the Pondicherry Government appointed an army officer, named Desvaux, to work as French agent at Tipu's *Darbar,* pending the arrival of Piveron de Morlat.[5] It does not appear, however, that either of them did actually take up the appointment. In 1789 France appointed Comte de Macnamara, Commander of the naval squadron in Eastern waters, as a special envoy to Tipu. He came to Mahé in 1790 and had an interview with Tipu in April at the port of Chetuvayi. Nothing is known about the outcome of this interview, except that Tipu gave

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[1] P. A. mss. 1089 (proposals of the Company), 1090, 1094 (letters from the Directors of the Company to Tipu, dated 4th and 10th October); also 5298.

[2] *Ibid,* ms. 1097.

[3] *Ibid,* ms. 1115.

[4] *Ibid,* ms. 977.

[5] *Ibid,* ms. 1006 (decisions of the Advisory Committee).

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some rich presents for the King of France.[1] In a letter written in November 1790 to Marin at Mahé, Cossigny, while informing him of the murder of Macnamara in the Isle of France as a result of revolutionary troubles there, expressed an apprehension that if Tipu had submitted any political or military proposals to Macnamara for communication to the French Government, there was no means of knowing it after the tragic end of Macnamara's career.[2]

About the end of 1788 Tipu sent to Pondicherry the officer in command of the French contingent in his service, de Lallée, with some verbal proposals about drawing his relations closer to France.[3] There is, however, no record which throws any light on the nature of the proposals. In May 1789 Tipu wrote to Conway at Pondicherry, requesting him to send some naval officers who could give detailed information about Ceylon, Jeddah, Molucca, Borneo, China, France and England.[4] In July he wrote to Conway again, thanking him for having sent the naval officers he wanted and requesting him to send a printer with a printing machine.[5] In June, on the rumour of the Dutch going to cede Cochin to the English, Tipu wrote to Conway that the French should try to purchase the place from the Dutch.[6] He was in fact prompted not so much by friendship for the French as by the fear of another English establishment close to his territories. It was about this time that Tipu's Ambassadors returned to Pondicherry with letters and presents from the King of France. Tipu thanked Conway for the splendid reception given to them in Paris and stated that he was eagerly waiting to meet the distinguished French noble who was coming with his Amabssadors.[7] It might have referred to the Comte de Macnamara, Commander of the French Navy in Eastern waters, who escorted the Mysorean Ambassadors back to India, and was himself appointed a special envoy to Tipu. Or, it might have referred to the Comte de Civrac, who had resigned from the French army at the end of 1787 with a view to proceed to India and enter the service of Tipu Sultan. In giving this news to Conway at Pondicherry, the Minister, Comte de Montmorin, mentioned particularly that Civrac was an important person and enjoyed the favours of the Queen and of the Princesse de Lamballe.[1] Civrac, however, ultimately changed his mind on arrival in India and remained at Pondicherry, where he took an important part in the events of the Revolutionary period.

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[1] P. A. ms. 4671 (Macnamara to the Commandant of Mahé, 27th April 1790, from Chetuvâyi), ms. 4673 (Commandant of Mahé to the Governor of Pondicherry, 10th May). Chetuvayi was a small port on the Malabar Coast, between Ponnani and Cochin (*Madras District Gazetteers : Malabar and Anjengo*, p. 451).

[2] *Ibid* ms. 1323.

[3] *Ibid*, ms. 1112 (Tipu to Conway, 14th Dec. 1788).

[4] *Ibid*, ms. 1136.

[5] *Ibid*, ms. 1143.

[6] *Ibid*, ms. 1137.

[7] Martineau—*Lettres et Conventions des Gouverneurs de Pondichéry*, pp. 401-402.

During his next war with the English and their allies, the Marathas and Nizam Ali, which started in 1790, Tipu turned to Pondicherry for troops to augment the European contingent in his service, commanded first by de Lallée, and after his death in October 1790 by de Vigie So the news that orders had been sent from the Isle of France for the complete withdrawal of troops from Pondicherry, which, as we have noticed in a previous chapter, brought about the first political upheaval in that settlement, came to Tipu as an unpleasant surprise, since the withdrawal of French troops from India would deprive him of the only means of augmenting his European contingent or of impressing his enemies by a show of friendship with the French. In May 1790 de la Salle, one of the French officers in Mysore service, wrote to de Fresne that Tipu had expressed surprise and indignation at the news of the withdrawal of troops from Pondicherry. Tipu had asked de la Salle to write to de Fresne that if the measure had been forced upon the French by lack of money, they could have approached him, and he would have gladly made some contribution for the maintenance of troops at Pondicherry, since he felt that the ultimate effect of the withdrawal of French troops from India would be to encourage the aggressive designs of the English.[2] In June de la Salle wrote to de Fresne once more that Tipu had asked him to convey his assurance of the protection of Pondicherry against an English attack and to inform the Governor that he was shortly sending letters and presents for the King and Queen of France.[1] These letters and presents were sent shortly after through one of the principal officers of Tipu, Zainul Abedin, who was despatched on a special mission to Pondicherry.[2] The mission, as will be seen presently, related to getting some French troops from Pondicherry.

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[1] P. A. ms. 1035 (letter dated 2nd December 1787).

[2] *Ibid*, ms. 5300.

On the 13th October 1790 de Vigie, a cousin of de Lallée, wrote to de Fresne, informing him of his appointment by Tipu to succeed de Lallée in command of the French contingent after the latter's death in action at Dafrapur on the 7th. De Vigie assured de Fresne of his loyalty to his country, and promised to send him regular news about all developments in the kingdom of Mysore.[3] In December de Vigie sent one of his officers, named Pigeard, to Pondicherry with the object of getting 100 French troops for his contingent. His request was fortified by a letter from Tipu to de Fresne, appealing to the traditional friendship between him and the French, and asking for a reinforcement of 100 men for Vigie's contingent. Tipu also enquired about the truth of the rumours prevalent about the imminence of a war between England and France.[4] To this letter de Fresne replied with an assurance that he would do his best to supply the troops wanted by Tipu, but since he could not do so on his own authority, he was writing to the Governor-General, Cossigny, to send troops from the Isle of France. De Fresne also contradicted the rumour of an imminence of war between England and France, and concluded by expressing fervent hopes about a resounding victory for Tipu.[5] On the 6th January 1791 Tipu wrote to de Fresne, in reply to a previous request from the latter, that he had given peremptory orders to his army not to molest any of the French possessions during the course of the war with the English. He added that he was sending a letter for the King of France and another for the Governor-General, Cossigny.[1] De Fresne in reply thanked Tipu for the assurance of protection of the French possessions and expressed hopes for his victory in the war.[2]

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[1] P. A. ms. 1263.

[2] Martineau—*Lettres et Conventions des Gouverneurs de Pondichéry*, pp. 365-366.

[3] P. A. ms. 5301.

[4] Martineau, *op. cit.*, p. 364.

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 364-365.

Early in 1791 de Fresne made an attempt to end hostilities between Tipu and his enemies. The war had placed the French in a difficult position. Unable to do anything to help Tipu, they were not prepared to see the total destruction of his power, which would lose for them the support of a valuable ally in a future contingency. De Fresne was thus anxious to prevent a continuance of the war and thereby save as much as possible of Tipu's power. In January 1791, taking advantage of Tipu's presence at Permacoil, not far from Pondicherry, he sent a trusted agent named Leger, with a letter urging Tipu to end hostilities in the interest of the common people to whom the war meant only misery and devastation and proposing to offer his good offices to bring about a satisfactory settlement. In his reply to de Fresne, dated 25th January, Tipu appeared willing to accept the offer of French good offices and sent an officer, Abdul Nabi Khan, to Pondicherry to discuss the details.[3] It may be mentioned here that nothing came out of the French overtures to Tipu's enemies, and the war dragged on for nearly a year more. Perhaps, de Fresne was encouraged to offer his good offices by the hope of the defection of the Marathas and Nizam Ali from the English alliance. Anyway, in February, out of gratitude for his offer, Tipu sent de Fresne a beautiful grey horse as a present.[4] He also sent letters and presents for the King and Queen of France, and in April proposed to send Leger on a special mission to Paris.[5] It was inspired by rumours of an outbreak of war between France and England.

De Fresne took a keen interest in the progress of the war between Tipu and his enemies, kept himself fully informed of all the developments in the military situation in their minute details, and regularly sent long reports to the Minister in Paris and to the Governor-General in the Isle of France. But whatever might have been his personal desire to do something to prevent a total destruction of Tipu's power, his hands were tied not only by the lack of resources and internal troubles at Pondicherry but also by the instructions from the Ministry at home to preserve a strict neutrality in the war. It may be recalled that the outbreak of the war in India almost coincided with the beginning of the Revolution in France. Convulsed by such an unprecedented upheaval, which only increased in momentum as time passed, France had neither the means nor the will to interest herself in the fate of an Indian Power, however important it might be to her as an ally in a future war with England.

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[1] Martineau—*Lettres et Conventions des Gouverneurs de Pondichéry*, pp. 366-367.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 367.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 368.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 369.

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 370-372.

In October 1791 the Minister of Marine wrote to de Fresne, acknowledging receipt of his letters relating to the war in India. Although he feared that the power of Tipu might be totally crushed, he expressed satisfaction that de Fresne had so far preserved strict neutrality in accordance with his instructions.[1] Thus de Fresne had merely to look on till Tipu was thoroughly worsted at Seringapatam in February 1792 and was compelled to accept very drastic and humiliating terms of peace. In March de Fresne informed Cossigny and the Minister of the conclusion of peace. In his letter to the former, after giving the terms of peace, de Fresne bitterly observed, "It is a peace shameful for a Prince who has all along been attached to our nation and whom we have not given any support whatsoever."[2] In his letter to the Minister de Fresne gave a detailed account of the final action of the campaign before Serinagapatam and the humiliating terms of peace imposed on Tipu. He also made some interesting observations on the fighting quality of Indian troops and the admirable example of valour and tenacity given by Tipu's army against adversaries overwhelmingly superior in number. About Tipu himself, de Fresne remarked that he had more energy and determination than real military talent. He had failed to utilise his resources to prevent the English from crossing the Ghats and carrying the war into his own territory. He had badly guarded Bangalore and the organisation of the defences at Seringapatam had left much to be desired.'

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[1] P. A. ms. 1501.

[2] *Ibid,* ms. 1653 (letter dated 2nd March).

Even after the crushing terms imposed upon Tipu, de Fresne felt that the French could yet do something to resuscitate his power by supplying volunteers to augment the European contingent in his service. That assistance, combined with the expected defection of the Marathas and Nizam Ali from the English alliance, gave out some hope of a restoration of the old balance of power in south India. So immediately after the conclusion of peace, at the instance of de Fresne, Duplessis, the commander of the Pondicherry garrison, drew up a detailed scheme of raising a mixed contingent of 1800 men, 1200 Indians and 600 Europeans, for taking service with Tipu. The scheme was intended to be sent to Paris for the approval of the Government through Leger, who, it will be remembered, had been desired by Tipu in 1791 to go on a special mission to France on his behalf.[2]

In July 1792 de Fresne wrote to the Minister of Marine on the subject, forwarding at the same time a letter from Tipu requesting him to supply some French troops to augment the contingent under de Vigie. He stated that the garrison at Pondicherry was too small to permit him to accede to the request, and moreover Frenchmen proceeding from Pondicherry to join Tipu were likely to be stopped by the English while passing through the intervening territory under their control. The only means of sending men and munitions to Tipu was through the port of Mangalore on the Malabar Coast, and de Fresne stated that he was sending a copy of Tipu's letter to the Governor-General in the Isle of France, from where it would be easier to send men direct to the Malabar Coast. De Fresne also informed the Minister that Tipu intended sending another embassy to France, and added, "I had greatly condemned the move in 1787. It seems to me that nothing could be more embarrassing for us in Europe and injurious in India."[3]

Early in 1793 another appeal was made for some troops from Pondicherry to increase the French contingent in

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[1] P. A. ms. 1656 (letter dated 5th March).

[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 1664.

[3] *Ibid.*, ms. 1807 (letter dated 30th July 1792).

Tipu's service. This time it was made by de Vigie himself in two letters, dated 16th February, addressed to de Fresne and the Civil Commissioners who had arrived at Pondicherry some time earlier. Before that the news of the establishment of a Republic in France had reached the French in Tipu's service, and the latter decided to send a message to the Civil Commissioners at Pondicherry, expressing jubilation and professing loyalty to the country.[1] In forwarding the message to the Civil Commissioners, de Vigie sought their help to increase his contingent by 500 Frenchmen and 2,000 sepoys. He prayed that 100 men be sent to him every year from France and that the Pondicherry Government be authorised to supply him arms and other military equipments on cash payment.[2] To de Fresne de Vigie sent a copy of his letter and begged him to press his appeal for men and arms on the Civil Commissioners.[3]

The appeal, however, hardly got the time for serious consideration at Pondicherry or for transmission to France. Events were moving fast, and in June definite news reached India about the outbreak of war between England and Revolutionary France. Pondicherry was in a poor state of defence, and it was now the turn of the French to seek assistance from Tipu. In a letter to de Vigie, dated 4th July, Chermont, the new Governor of Pondicherry, stated that he had already informed Tipu of the outbreak of war between the English and the French and had appealed to him to take advantage of the opportunity to break with the English and join in an alliance with the French. He urged de Vigie to use his influence with Tipu to persuade him to join the war.[4] Chermont's appeal to Tipu remained unanswered, as was only to be expected. Since 1785 the French had remained aloof and had not given any support to Tipu in his wars. They had not even acceded to his request for some French volunteers and arms, and it could hardly be expected that Tipu would allow himself to be lured to complete destruction in 1793 by a vain offer of alliance with France.

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[1] P. A. ms. 5305.

[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 5306 (letter dated 16th February 1793).

[3] *Ibid.*, ms. 5307 (same date as 5306).

[4] *Ibid.*, ms. 2140.

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VI. *Relations with Minor Powers.*

It remains for us to notice very briefly French relations with some of the minor Powers. With the Nawab of the Carnatic the French continued to maintain diplomatic relations, keeping a regular *Wakil* at his *Darbar*, named Venkata Rao.[1] But these relations had no political significance whatsoever, as the Nawab of the Carnatic had passed completely under English domination and had even taken up his residence at Madras, where he was closely watched by the English. French relations with the Nawab of the Carnatic during the period under review were confined to an occasional exchange of letters of compliments between the Governor of Pondicherry and the Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan and his son; while the work of the French *Wakil* at the Nawab's *Darbar* was merely to send news about Madras, including gossips and rumours, to the Government of Pondicherry.[2]

In 1788 Conway, the Governor of Pondicherry, received offers from the chiefs of Ramnad and Madura of cessions of territories in return for French military help in liberating the two principalities from the yoke of the Nawab of the Carnatic.[3] It was obviously impossible for the French to accept the proposals, which would have involved a war with the English.

Early in 1792 there came a similar proposal from the king of Kandy in Ceylon. The latter, tired of Dutch domination, sent a secret embassy to Pondicherry, expressing friendship for the French and proposing to cede to them some territories on the coast which had been unjustly usurped by the Dutch in violation of their treaty with him. The motive was obvious, to escape from the rigid control of the Dutch by inviting another European nation into the island; and acceptance of the proposal by the French would have involved war with the Dutch, who claimed sovereignty over the whole island. It was not seriously entertained, and de Fresne gave a vague and evasive reply, containing merely empty sentiments of goodwill for the king of Kandy. Some of the letters of the members of the secret embassy were intercepted by the Dutch, who at once sent sharp protests to the Governor of Pondicherry and threatened to close all the ports of Ceylon to French shipping.[1] It led to some bitter correspondence between the Governments of Pondicherry and Colombo, and later de Fresne sent a full report of the whole episode to Cossigny, the Governor-General, and to the Minister in Paris.[2]

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[1] P. A. ms. 1029 (Conway to the son of the Nawab of the Carnatic, 23rd November 1787).

[2] *Ibid.*, mss. 1025, 1028, 1047-1049.

[3] *Ibid.*, mss. 1063, 1113.

VII. *Report of Lescallier to the National Convention.*

We may conclude this chapter on French diplomatic relations with the country Powers with a brief reference to the report on India dated 15th October 1794 drawn up by Lescallier, one of the Civil Commissioners, for submission to the National Convention and the Executive Council in Paris.[3] It was written from the Isle of France, where Lescallier had gone after the fall of Pondicherry in 1793. Lescallier prefaced the report as an account "of the interests of the French nation in India and of the means I have foreseen or prepared for the prosperity and glory of the Republic and for bringing about the fall of the odious colossus of the English power in these rich and vast regions." He started by asserting that in spite of the loss of all her possessions in India France could still revive her power and influence, if only she could make it clear to the Indians that she stood for the principles of justice and liberty, while the object of English policy was domination and conquest. The French would in that case be invited by "men of all castes and all religions" as liberators, "as their unique hope". Lescallier did not envisage France to become a great territorial Power in India; on the other hand, he wanted her to remain content with only a few possessions, "with the consent and goodwill of Indians", the revenues of which would be just sufficient to meet the administrative and military expenses.

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[1] P. A. mss. 5246, 5247 (letters from the Dutch Governor and Councillors at Colombo to de Fresne, dated 18th March and 29th May 1792).

[2] *Ibid*, ms. 1787 (de Fresne to Cossigny, 28th June 1792), ms. 1791 (de Fresne to the Minister, 29th June).

[3] *Ibid*, ms. 2200.

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Lescallier continued that since any successful operation in India against the English would depend entirely on the support and co-operation of the country Powers, he had tried to establish close relations with them during his short stay at Pondicherry. In order to avoid the risks involved in communicating through intermediaries and interpreters, he had learnt Hindusthani and Persian and could thus get into direct contact with the Indian Princes. He had corresponded with Tipu and had tried to give him a correct idea of the Revolution in France to counteract the propaganda of the English. Lescallier reproduced the translation of a note handed over to him on the eve of his departure from India by an agent of Tipu, as expressing the views of his master. Tipu was unwilling to enter into any alliance with France unless the latter guaranteed not to conclude peace without his concurrence. Evidently, it had reference to what he considered as letting down by France in 1783. Secondly, he wanted that the French expeditionary force to be sent to India was to be placed under his orders, and he explained, "your Generals do not know the method of making war in India, although quite experienced in European warfare."

Lescallier had also been in communication with the Raja of Tanjore, who was ready in July 1793 to make a concrete proposal about establishing closer relations with France. The talks had failed only because of the sudden outbreak of war. He had further opened correspondence with the Princes of Madura and Chirakkal to draw them closer to France, and had also carried on talks at Karikal with the secret embassy sent by the king of Kandy. Although he could not give an immediate decision in favour of the latter's proposal, he got an assurance that the king of Kandy, who had originally thought of approaching the English failing to get any help from the French, would not start negotiations with any other foreign Power before eighteen months, by which time a definite reply was to be expected from France. When Lescallier started from Tranquebar in November 1793, he had an interview with the Ceylonese representative, who even proposed to go with him to the Isle of France to get an early decision from the authorities there, but later changed his mind thinking of the risks of the long voyage.

Lescallier concluded that although he had no direct dealing with the other Princes, he felt certain that all of them, including those outwardly allied with the English, would throw in their lot with the French when the opportune moment came. Many of them had French contingents in their service, which could be of great help when the time for action arrived. Pending the return of the French to India, Lescallier had arranged a means of maintaining relations with the country Powers, through a dispossessed Nawab who had expressed his readiness to carry on secret diplomatic work at the various *Darbars*. Lescallier also referred to the friendly overtures he had received from Pegu and Cochin-China and the good commercial opportunities that France had in those countries.

That was in brief the report of Lescallier. It is hardly necessary to examine the reliability of the statements made and of the hopes held out, since the report of the Civil Commissioner was not given any importance whatsoever and produced no reaction on the Government in Paris. For years France was to remain too busy with her difficulties and ambitions on the continent of Europe to think of her few lost possessions in India. The only interest of the report of Lescallier lies in the fact that through it we hear for the last time the voice of the old optimists, who during the period from 1763 to 1780 had flooded the Ministry of Marine and Colonies with all sorts of projects about diplomatic alliances and military operations in India. After this date that voice became practically silent, with only a feeble revival during the days of the Consulate; and when the French came back to India in 1816 their old dreams had completely faded away.

CHAPTER XIX

REVOLUTIONARY FRANCE AND INDIA

I. *The Isles of France and Bourbon.*

The English had captured promptly all the French possessions in India immediately on the outbreak of the Revolutionary War. But the French were not driven out altogether from the East. They retained for seventeen years more two outposts in the Indian Ocean, the Isles of France and Bourbon, which served them as bases for carrying on the struggle against the English, by organising commerce-raiding expeditions, carrying on intrigues with Indian Princes, watching political developments in India and making preparations for landing troops there when circumstances might turn favourable. Not that they really could do much, during the seventeen years that they retained possession of the Isles, to threaten the English position in India. But they inflicted severe damage to English trade, and by their threats of military intervention kept the English authorities in India constantly on the *qui-vive.* In the end, however, these activities only helped the further expansion of English power in India and the elimination of the French totally from the East by the capture of the Isles of France and Bourbon.

We have noticed already the administrative re-organisation of the French possessions in the East on the eve of the Revolution, by which the Indian settlements were united with the Isles of France and Bourbon into one government, under a Governor-General with his seat in the Isle of France. This was prompted by three motives: desire for economy in administration, realisation of the impossibility of executing ambitious political projects in India at the time, and rather exaggerated ideas about the strategic importance of the Isles for launching large-scale military and naval expeditions to India. The Isles of France and Bourbon, however, were still not regarded as important for themselves, but as only helping the realisation of French political ambitions in India better than the Indian settlements. If the French were to take the English by surprise in India, preparations for war could not be made either in the ports of France or in the Indian settlements, but only in the Isles of France and Bourbon, where secrecy could be maintained. The distance of these Isles from India was long enough to elude vigilant watch by the English, and yet not too long to prevent them from being effective bases for launching an attack on India. "Situated about a month's voyage from the coasts of India, the Isle of France could constitute an arsenal of the first order, on condition that it was equipped with all necessary materials and that troops and a naval squadron were sent there, not at the moment of the declaration of war but in a time of peace".[1]

But the possession of the Isles had disadvantages as well, as experience amply proved. If the Isles served as useful bases for French naval operations, by providing safe shelters their possession induced French Admirals to leave Indian waters on the first reverse or mere fear of defeat. That was how d'Aché and Tronjoly had behaved. Not without reason did Sonnerat observe, "The Isle of France was and will always be fatal to the establishments that the French have in India".[2] De Suffren understood the demoralising effect of the possession of the Isles, and never returned there during the whole course of the war. It is worth quoting another contemporary opinion on the value of the possession of the Isle of France. "The Isle of France is considered as a fortress which protects our Indian possessions. It is as if one considers Bordeaux as the citadel for the protection of our American colonies".[3] Abbé Raynal perhaps gave the most balanced view on the subject: "There is so necessary a connection between the Isle of France and Pondicherry, that those two possessions are entirely dependent on each other; for without the Isle of France, there would be no protection for the settlements in India; and, without Pondicherry, the Isle of France would be exposed to the invasion of the English from

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[1] Prentout—*L'Ile de France sous Decaen*, Preface, p. ix.

[2] Sonnerat—*Voyage aux Indes Orientales et à la Chine*, Vol. II, p. 366.

[3] Bernardin de Saint-Pierre—*Voyage à l'Ile de France*, Vol. I, p. 293.

Asia as well as from Europe."[1] How true the last part proved to be in 1810!

The news of the Revolution in France produced repercussions in the Isles of France and Bourbon as in all the settlements in India, and everywhere small groups of Frenchmen played the drama of the Revolution, each in their own way. In the Isles of France and Bourbon the extremists carried the day, the assembly of citizens seized all power, the administrative system broke down, and there was complete disorder and confusion. The Commander of the French squadron in the East, Comte de Macnamara, was killed in November 1790 by a turbulent mob. Shortly after, the Governor-General, Conway, resigned in disgust and was succeeded by Cossigny. Cossigny also had no better luck. He soon got tired of the troubles in the Isles and wanted to be recalled. He was succeeded in June 1792 by Malartic, sent from France. With the new Governor-General also came four Civil Commissioners, Laboucher, Dumorier, Lescallier and Tirol, to organise administration in the different French possessions in the East on the lines of the new Constitution for colonies decreed by the Constituent Assembly. In 1793 the outbreak of war lost for the French all their settlements in India, and the Isles of France and Bourbon also were practically cut off from the mother country. The Revolutionary Government of Paris was much too occupied with its own problems to think of the two small colonies in the distant Indian Ocean. They were thus left to their own resources for self-preservation.

Under the Directory an attempt was made to draw the colonies closer to the mother country. In July 1796 there arrived in the Isle of France twelve hundred troops under General Magallon and a small naval division. But the attempt to re-establish the authority of the mother country failed, because of the opposition of the Colonial Assembly to abide by the decree about the emancipation of slaves made by the Revolutionary Government of Paris. The economy of the two islands was dependent on slave labour. Besides, the emancipation of slaves was considered dangerous for the security of the small white population. Thus during the Directory regime the Isles of France and Bourbon continued to remain practically independent of the mother country. The situation changed under the Consulate, which modified the decree about the emancipation of slaves to suit the interests of the white population of the two islands. It helped the re-establishment of the authority of the mother country over the islands, although the local assembly continued to function for a few years more. Malartic died in the Isle of France on the 28th July 1800 and was succeeded by Magallon, who retained office till the arrival of Decaen as Captain-General of all the French possessions in the East in August 1803. Decaen proved to be an able lieutenant of the First Consul, by whom he had been nominated. He promptly dissolved the Colonial Assembly, established a strong government, and by introducing a number of beneficial measures endeared himself to the people.

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[1] Abbé Raynal—*A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies* (tr. by Justamond), II, p. 423.

II. *French Privateers.*

During all this period the French of the two Isles were not indifferent to the great national struggle against the English. But distracted by revolutionary troubles and left without adequate military and naval resources for an expedition to India, they confined their efforts to commerce-raiding operations in Indian waters, which did not of course affect the dominating position held by the English in India, but nevertheless inflicted severe damage to their trade and commerce. They were not, however, inspired entirely, or even largely, by patriotic motives. The policy of commerce-raiding was imposed on them more by the necessity of circumstances. They had to live, and being virtually cut off from the mother country till the Peace of Amiens, and not getting adequate help from her even after the Peace, they were forced to engage in privateering as the only means of survival. The prizes to be-hoped for were enormous, since the English had obtained practically a monopoly of the Eastern trade during the war; while the risks involved for the French were nil. It was not possible for the English to maintain an adequate naval force in Indian waters to assure protection to all their merchantmen; and with ordinary daring and skill

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it was always possible to surprise and capture richly-laden ships. There was again no fear of retaliation in kind, since the French had no trade of their own. It is necessary to bear this aspect of the situation in mind, although it must be admitted that among the French privateers of the period there were men who showed extraordinary daring and adventurous spirit, even at moments of the gravest crisis and in the face of superior enemy forces. Their conduct was in keeping with the best naval tradition in any country, and drew admiration even from their adversaries.

It is beyond the scope of the present work to give a detailed account of the deeds of the French privateers during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. They read almost like romance. Curious readers may turn to the interesting pages of the *Les Corsaires Français sous la Republique et L'Empire* by Gallois, *Robert Surcouf* by Canat, and the *Final French Struggles in India and on the Indian Seas* by Malleson. The large majority of the French and Créole population of the two islands lived on privateering, and even soldiers and sailors of the navy often deserted and took to this more lucrative profession. Success was so certain that merchants and capitalists were always ready to furnish money and supplies for equipping boats for such purposes. The privateers generally employed small, light-armed and fast-sailing vessels, with just a small crew. Some of these boats were built in the Isles, and some were the very ships captured earlier. Among the most well-known of the privateers were: Robert Surcouf, Potier de la Houssaye, Perroud, Lemême, Malroux and Dutertre. The losses they inflicted ran into millions of pounds, and the panic they created among English traders may be gathered from the pages of the *Asiatic Annual Register* of the period.

The degree of success of the French privateers may be measured from the fact that from 1793 to 1797 the English lost 1800 ships more than the French.[1] This figure is of course to be viewed in the light of the fact that practically all the trade was then in English hands, while French shipping had been swept off the seas. Even then one cannot get away from the conclusion that the French, without any navy worth the name, had succeeded in dealing a heavy blow on the enemy. This success was due mainly to the privateers, although after Amiens there was a small French naval squadron in Eastern waters under Linois and later under Hamelin, which also engaged in commerce-raiding operations. Between the naval officers and the privateers there was acute jealousy, the privateers magnifying their role and the naval officers treating them with undisguised contempt.

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[1] From the *Lloyds Register*, quoted by Malleson in *Final French Struggles in India and on the Indian Seas*, p. 81.

The attitude of the privateers is best illustrated by the advice given by Surcouf to the First Consul in 1803. On the resumption of hostilities the First Consul sought the opinion of the 'King of Corsairs' about the policy by which the French navy could be so re-organised as to be able to cause the greatest injury to the English. Surcouf replied that under the existing circumstances privateering was the only kind of war possible and profitable for the French, and that their policy should be to avoid great battles with the English fleets, but instead to construct and send out large numbers of frigates and light ships which would speedily ensure the total destruction of English commerce.[1] No doubt it was a novel suggestion, which promised at least a temporary success. But, be it said to the credit of the First Consul, he refused to tarnish the honour of the nation by scrapping up the navy and confining French maritime efforts to the depredations of privateers. It would have been unworthy of a great nation, with a glorious naval tradition built up by Tourville, Duguay-Trouin, Jean Bart, Forbin and de Suffren.

The operations of the daring privateers from the Isles of France and Bourbon during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars had a striking success, but it was only temporary. It was never possible by this means to decide the course of the Anglo-French conflict or to weaken in the slightest degree the dominant position held by the English in India. In the larger context the operations of the French privateers had only a nuisance value, which, but for the distractions of the Egyptian expedition and the second Anglo-Maratha war, would have been eliminated long before the final attack on the French

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[1] Canat—*Robert Surcouf*, p. 280.

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Isles in 1810. It was the depredations of the privateers, rather than feeble French projects for an attack on India, which forced upon the English the necessity of capturing the Isles of France and Bourbon.

III. *French Adventurers in the Service of the Indian Princes.*

Although in 1793 the French lost all their possessions in India, to the English the French menace continued for ten years more, in a different form. We have noticed already that after the fall of Pondicherry in 1761 a large number of Frenchmen found their way to the courts of different Indian Princes and took to the profession of military adventurers, selling their services to the highest bidders. Most of them were miserable wretches, as both Modave and Bussy testified, and brought no credit to their nation. Some of them had military talents and organising ability and served their masters well; only a few of them showed any inclination for advancing their national interests with the help of their military contingents and their influence over their masters. None of them, however, in the earlier period reached that position of eminence and power as was attained by their compatriots in the last decade of the 18th century, the heyday of European military adventurers in India. By that time the superiority of European-trained and European-officered infantry battalions had been so decidedly proved that nearly all the Indian Princes sought to enlist European military adventurers in their service for organising such forces. These adventurers were of all nationalities,—English, French, Dutch, German, Italian, etc., but the French were clearly more numerous than the others. They organised large infantry battalions with artillery, were assigned the revenue and administration of numerous districts, and acquired great influence in the counsels of their masters. The commanders of these armies became almost independent potentates, with their own estates, forts and arsenals, and even displaying their national colours. Naturally, when they were of the French nationality, they could not but be viewed with great alarm by the English.

In the last decade of the 18th century French influence in this sense was rising in many of the important *Darbars* of India.

Tipu had in his service a French contingent commanded by de Lallée, and after his death in action in 1790, by his cousin de Vigie. But it was neither numerous nor strong, and after the fall of Pondicherry in 1793 was deprived of the means of receiving regular reinforcements. This contingent soon languished and became a rabble, but its Jacobinical enthusiasm became naturally a source of anxiety for the English.

More important was the force organised by Raymond in Hyderabad. We have noticed already Raymond's correspondence with the Governor of Pondicherry, asking for arms to equip his contingent and pledging loyalty to the nation. He started with a small infantry corps of 300 men, which was raised to 1500 at the time of the Confederate war against Tipu (1790-1792). After the war Raymond was even allowed by the English to select arms from the arsenal at Madras.[1] Obviously he was still not regarded by the English as dangerous, although he raised new battalions and put in the field nearly eleven thousand men at the battle of Kardla in 1795. Raymond's corps fought bravely against the superior force of the Marathas, and might have achieved victory but for the pusillanimous flight of Nizam Ali and his peremptory orders to Raymond to retreat. Anyway, after this battle Raymond's advancement was quick. Disappointed at getting no help from the English, Nizam Ali ordered the dismissal of the two English battalions lent by the Company's Government for his protection (countermanded immediately after, because of the rebellion of his son, Ali Jah), and asked Raymond to increase his battalions, which at the time of Raymond's death numbered about 14,000. For the maintenance of this large army Raymond was given a territorial assignment, yielding a revenue of 18 lakhs of rupees a year and including the district of Kurpa on the sea coast, which enabled him to communicate with the French and co-operate with any expeditionary force that France might have sent.

Raymond was a remarkable man and acquired great influence at the *Darbar* of Nizam Ali. No better tribute could have been paid to him than that by Malleson: "No adventurer in India ever stood higher than he did. He was brave, magnificent, generous, affable and vigilant . . . . . No European of mark

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[1] Wilks *History of Mysoor*, II, p. 622.

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who preceded him, no European of mark who followed him, in India, ever succeeded in gaining to such an extent, the love, the esteem, the admiration of the natives of the country".[1] But it is doubtful whether "the one dream of his life was to carry out, by the means still open to him, the schemes of Dulpleix, of Lally, and of Suffren".[2] It is true that all the officers in Raymond's army were Frenchmen, fervent Jacobins like him, that they fought under the French flag and the Cap of Liberty was engraved on their buttons, and that Raymond sometimes corresponded with the French adventurers in Mysore as with those in Maratha service. But there is nothing to show that he had any deep-laid political project in his mind or that he had any connection with the Isle of France or with the Revolutionary Government of Paris. Fortunately for his reputation, Raymond died on the 25th March 1798, six months before the sudden crisis which destroyed his army without a single shot being fired.

Raymond was succeeded by his second-in-command, another remarkable French adventurer named Piron. He was an even more ardent Jacobin than Raymond and less tactful and prudent. He roused the susceptibilities of the English by sending to Sindhia's General Perron, a silver tree with a Cap of Liberty as a *souvenir* and by his open profession of hostile intentions. Perhaps, even these moves, whatever their worth, would have been ignored by the English, if at the same time the French menace had not suddenly loomed very large by the disclosure of Tipu's intrigues with the French and the news of Bonaparte's invasion of Egypt. The new Governor-General, Wellesley, decided to act before the danger clouds thickened. His first step was to impose a new treaty on the Nizam, requiring him to disband the entire force created by Raymond and to receive instead four additional English battalions. Nizam Ali signed the treaty on the 1st September 1798, partly under English pressure and partly for fear of the overgrowing power of Piron and his French officers. English troops were quickly moved in, and on the 22nd October 1798 the 'French army', as Wellesley described it, was surprised and disbanded without a shot being fired. The disbandment was rendered easier by the outbreak of a mutiny in Piron's force, the men clamouring for arrears of pay and holding their officers in captivity, from which they were liberated by the timely arrival of the English troops. The French officers were guaranteed security of life and property and taken to Chandernagore, from where they were to be sent to Europe.

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[1] Malleson—*Final French Struggles in India and on the Indian Seas*, p. 244.

[2] *Ibid.*

About the same time that Raymond started raising a European-trained infantry force for the Nizam, another able adventurer, de Boigne, started organising a similar force for the Maratha Prince, Mahadaji Sindhia, who was making a bid for establishing his supremacy in north India. De Boigne was not a Frenchman but a Savoyard; the force he organised fought under the flag of Savoy, the White Cross; and the officers he appointed were taken from all nationalities, including English. But when he retired from Sindhia's service in December 1795 and the command was given to a Frenchman, Perron, French influence became decidedly predominant, and Sindhia's infantry brigades became as much a source of anxiety to the English as the force under Raymond and Piron in Hyderabad.

De Boigne's whole career shows that he came out to India not to organise an anti-English force but only to seek fortune in trade or in the service of an Indian Prince. He started for India with letters of introduction from an English nobleman, Earl Percy, served for a time as an ensign in a regiment of the Madras Native Infantry, quitted the English service and yet won the patronage of the Governor-General Warren Hastings, entered the service of Sindhia with the help of the English Resident at his *Darbar*, Anderson, and with the consent of Warren Hastings, stipulated in his agreement with Sindhia that he would never be required to fight against the English, joined in very profitable trading operations in Oudh with the French deserter in English service, Claude Martin, and invested a large part of his private fortunes in the English Company's papers.[1]

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[1] It was suggested later that de Boigne went to Paris after the Treaty of Amiens and became the adviser of the First Consul about the means of reviving French influence in India. Wellesley wrote to General Lake on the 8th July 1803: "M. Du Boigne (Scindiah's late general) is now the

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De Boigne first entered the service of Sindhia in 1784, being entrusted with raising two infantry battalions of 850 men each, equipped and trained in the European fashion, and was given a salary of one thousand rupees a month. This force proving its worth in establishing Sindhia's authority in north India, de Boigne was asked in 1790 to raise it to a *corps d'armée* of thirteen battalions of infantry with cavalry and artillery, and later to three brigades of 18,000 regular infantry, 6,000 irregulars, 2,000 irregular horse, 600 Afghan cavalry and 2,000 guns. For the maintenance of this army, a vast area in the Doab, consisting of 52 districts and yielding a revenue of 16 lakhs of rupees (later raised to 22 lakhs of rupees), was assigned to de Boigne, which he administered as a virtually independent potentate. The fortress of Agra was handed over to him to serve as his arsenal, and he fixed his headquarters at Aligarh. When Mahadaji Sindhia started for Poona in 1793, de Boigne was left practically as the ruler of north India. But the turn of Maratha politics after the sudden death of Mahadaji Sindhia in 1794 made him feel uneasy about the future, and at the end of 1795 he retired from Maratha service with the reluctant consent of Daulat Rao Sindhia. Finally, he returned to Europe with enormous riches.

After the retirement of de Boigne his position was taken by Perron. This French adventurer has left some boasting remarks that he had driven de Boigne from Sindhia's service by his intrigues. It is difficult to say how far that is true. De Boigne had personal reasons to retire to Europe with his immense fortunes, and, besides, Perron was in frequent friendly correspondence with de Boigne after the latter's return to Europe. Perron first came out to India in 1780 as a common sailor. He deserted his ship to seek fortune in the service of an Indian Prince. It was not till 1789 that luck favoured him and he was given the command of the second brigade newly

chief confidant of Bonaparte; he is constantly at St. Cloud. I leave you to judge why and wherefore?" (Martin—*Despatches, Minutes and Correspondence of the Marquess Wellesley*, III, p. 183). There is, however, no definite basis for this statement. De Boigne's biographer St. Genis makes no reference to it. Finally, in Compton's *European Military Adventurers of Hindustan* (pp. 98-99) there is a letter from the grandson of de Boigne, refuting the story of de Boigne's connection with Napoleon.

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raised by de Boigne. Perron soon distinguished himself in battle and won the confidence of his chief by his courage, enterprise and devotion to duty. In 1793 he was sent with his brigade to accompany Mahadaji Sindhia to Poona. He fought bravely at the battle of Kardla in 1795 and won the favour of Daulat Rao Sindhia, who appointed him to the command of his army in north India after the retirement of de Boigne.

Under Perron the army was increased by two more brigades, and at the same time the character of the force changed. Perron showed marked favour to French officers, increasing their number and appointing them to higher ranks in preference to officers of other nationalities, many of whom left in disgust. It has been suggested that Perron had a deep-laid political plan, of creating a strong French army either to throw off the allegiance to Sindhia and establish French domination in north India or to co-operate with an expeditionary force that might be sent from France for the destruction of the English power in India. It is, however, difficult to say how far that supposition is well-founded. Whatever Perron's position might have been with his five brigades, if he had any political foresight, he must have realised that the English could never allow the establishment of French political domination in north India, and that his own resources were hopelessly unequal in any fight with them. As for his connection with the French Government, it is doubtful how much about him was actually known in Paris. After the Peace of Amiens the First Consul's instructions to Decaen included establishing contact with Perron; but when Perron returned to France in 1805, he was coldly received by the Emperor, was not consulted on any of the projects relating to India, and he spent his days in total seclusion from politics.

Perron enjoyed undisputed power for about six years. But on the eve of the crisis which ended his career in 1803, he felt his position shaky and committed a political blunder which hastened that crisis. The instigation of his enemies lost him the confidence of his master, Daulat Rao Sindhia, and he lost his judgment in trying to be over-alert to preserve his own power. Thus, when towards the end of 1802 he received a summons from Daulat Rao Sindhia to send a part of his force to the assistance of the Peshwa, driven out of Poona by Holkar, he saw in it a sinister move to deprive him of his power, and delayed to obey the summons too long to prevent the Peshwa from concluding the Treaty of Bassein with the English, which made the second Anglo-Maratha war inevitable. When the war broke out in 1803, Perron, deserted by many of his trusted French officers and anxious to preserve his private fortunes, surrendered to General Lake without striking a blow. Perron's army simply melted away, and the bubble of the French menace burst at the first prick. Only at Assaye and Laswari did the European-trained battalions offer a stiff resistance, revealing to the English how difficult would have been their task if they had allowed the Marathas more time to organise armies on the lines introduced by de Boigne, Perron and Dudrenec. Perron returned to Europe in 1805 and lived in quiet retirement on the immense fortunes he had amassed in India.[1]

It is not possible to give in a short compass an account of all the French adventurers of the period, nor is it necessary for our purpose, since their activities had little political importance. Mention may be made of only a few others,—Frimont, Pedron, Bourquin and Dudrenec. Frimont was the commander of the small French force at Chandernagore and was arrested during the Revolutionary troubles there. Released from detention, he went to Delhi to seek employment and was appointed commander of a brigade by de Boigne. His death in 1795 proved a lucky opportunity for Perron, who thus became second-in-command under de Boigne and succeeded him after his retirement. Pedron, who had served under Madec, became the commander of one of the brigades under de Boigne in 1795. Unlike Perron, Pedron resisted the English at Aligarh in 1803 and was taken prisoner. Bourquin, like Perron, was a deserter from the French navy. After a chequered career he rose to be the trusted lieutenant of Perron, but on the eve of the outbreak of the second Anglo-Maratha war he deserted his chief and went over to his enemies, in an attempt to supplant Perron in command of Sindhia's force in north India. Defeated by the English near Delhi, he surrendered to General Lake in 1803. Dudrenec was also a deserter from the French navy and had served under Madec. In 1791 he entered the service of Tukoji Holkar, and his infantry battalions proved their worth at the battle of Kardla in 1795. In 1801 driven by the hostility of Tukoji Holkar's successor, Jaswant Rao, he went over to the latter's enemy, Daulat Rao Sindhia, and was given the command of a brigade under Perron. On the outbreak of the second Anglo-Maratha war, following the example of many other French officers, Dudrenec surrendered to the English to save the remains of his private fortunes.

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[1] For the career of Perron, see Martineau—*Le Général Perron, généralissime des armées du Grand Mogol.*

We have given a brief review of the principal French adventurers in the service of the Indian Princes in the last decade of the 18th century. Malleson and, following him, several French historians also have tried to emphasize the political importance of their work. They have been pictured as agents of France, pursuing national interests, and providing a plausible hope for the establishment of French political influence over a large part of India. Contemporary English opinion also, alarmed by the striking successes of French arms in Europe and the intrepidity of Napoleon Bonaparte, magnified the threat to the English power in India held out by the French-trained battalions in the service of the Indian Princes. The letters and despatches of Wellesley show clearly the extent of his anxiety caused by the presence of large 'French armies' in a position to co-operate with any expeditionary force that might be sent from France. The imposition of the treaty of subsidiary alliance on the Nizam in 1798 and the second Anglo-Maratha war were both mainly prompted by the desire to eliminate the French menace.

In truth, the menace was rather exaggerated and the political role of the French adventurers magnified beyond all proportions. The careers of these men clearly show that their sole objective was to amass private fortunes as fast as they could, and then to return to Europe and live in enjoyment of their wealth. Some of them could save in five to ten years' time as much as a quarter to a half million pounds. A few of them demonstrated their Jacobinical leanings, but none of them had any definite political objective of establishing French power in India, either by their own resources or in co-operation with an expeditionary force that might be sent from France. There is nothing to show that these adventurers had any contact or influence with the authorities of the Isle of France or with the Government of Paris. Down to the Peace of Amiens there was of course no question of France sending an expeditionary force to India. But the correspondence of Napoleon during the Egyptian expedition and the instructions of the Directory show how little was really known in France about the position and resources of the French adventurers in India. When Decaen was sent out to India in 1803 after the Treaty of Amiens. his instructions included just a vague suggestion about establishing in a surreptitious manner contact with Perron. Thus even before the destruction of the French forces in the service of the Indian Princes, it does not appear that the plans of the French Government relating to India depended to any very great extent on their co-operation.

Nor were the French-trained forces in the service of the Indian Princes quite so formidable by themselves as appeared in the imagination of contemporaries, and emphasized by Malleson and others. They were formidable as against the undisciplined hordes of Pathans and Rajputs, but were no match to the English and their veteran sepoys. They had neither the number nor the resources to contest with the English for supremacy in India. They had no cohesion in their ranks either, and showed up their real weakness at the first sign of danger. The ease with which a fully armed force of 14,000 men was disbanded at Hyderabad in 1798, the rapidity with which Perron's army melted away in 1803, and the pusillanimity with which most of the French officers hastened to make terms with the English in an effort to secure their private fortunes show. despite the stiff resistance at Assaye and Laswari, the real nature of the French menace. Even less than the privateers in the Indian Ocean could the French adventurers in the service of the Indian Princes shake the foundation of the English power in India.

IV. *Tipu and the French.*

French military adventurers and their intrigues. far from shaking the foundation of the English power in India. only succeeded in strengthening it and completing the process of its expansion. But for the French-officered armies of the Nizam and the Marathas, even Wellesley would not have thought it necessary to disturb the political relations with these two country Powers, leaving perhaps to time the extension of English control over them, helped by the process of their internal decay, already evident. The treaty with the Nizam in 1798, the treaty with the Peshwa in 1802 and the second Anglo-Maratha war were all necessitated by the determination to remove the French menace. Nowhere, however, was the contribution of the French to the expansion of the English power in India better illustrated than in French relations with Tipu in the closing years of the 18th century. It is difficult of course to determine what contributed more to the destruction of Tipu,—his own political folly, or the empty hopes held out by the French which lured him into the trap laid by his enemies, the English. The relations between the French and Tipu during this period revealed a blundering diplomacy on the part of both, Tipu inviting his own destruction, and the French helping the annihilation of a Power which could have given them a base of operations in India when they were really in a position to strike against the English.

After the third Anglo-Mysore war (1790-92) which deprived Tipu of nearly half his territories and put the English in a more advantageous striking position than before, Tipu naturally nursed a grievance against the English and looked for an opportunity to recover his territories with the help of the French, his traditional allies and at war with the English since 1793. He had no knowledge, however, of the situation in Europe, the difficulties of the French in carrying the war to India or giving him any tangible help, and the anarchical conditions in the Isles of France and Bourbon, left to their fate by the mother country and not possessing resources even for self-defence. He had a small French contingent in his service, but the men of this contingent also were not better informed about the state of affairs in France. In order to acquire great influence in the counsels of the Mysore ruler they gave out exaggerated stories about the successes of French Revolutionary arms in Europe and the ability and readiness of France to give him substantial help against the English. For four years after the fall of Pondicherry in 1793 this propaganda did not lead to any definite result, except merely keeping alive Tipu's hopes about getting French help some day. How unreal were these hopes would be evident from the fact that during these years Tipu had no contact either with France or even with the Isles of France and Bourbon, and had thus no means of knowing the real situation.

Then in the early part of 1797 an accidental ship-wreck at Mangalore of a privateering vessel from the Isle of France opened up a means of communication between Tipu and the authorities of the French Isles. The port was then in the charge of Ghulam Ali, who had been a member of Tipu's embassy to France and had thus some slight acquaintance with the French language. Ripaud, the unscrupulous French privateer, introduced himself as second-in-command in the Isle of France and having been sent as an envoy to Tipu to concert measures of co-operation against the English. He also declared that there was in the Isle of France a large army ready to embark for India. Ripaud was taken to Seringapatam, where he was received with great honour and generosity by Tipu, despite the warning of some of his ministers not to take an unknown adventurer at his word.

Perhaps, to pose all the better as a representative of the Revolutionary Government of France, Ripaud harangued the men of the French contingent in Tipu's service on Revolutionary doctrines and ideals and established a Jacobin Club at Seringapatam. It had its first session on the 5th May. Ripaud opened it with a passionate discourse, proposing burning of all symbols of royalty and hoisting the tricolour flag. This discourse was well received, and every one swore to defend the Republican Constitution and to sacrifice life for the cause of Liberty. The men of the French contingent in Tipu's service were so impressed by the patriotic fervour of Ripaud that they asked him to draw up a new set of laws to govern their corps in keeping with Revolutionary ideals and practice. The code drawn up by Ripaud was based on the laws during the Reign of Terror in France, including the setting up of a Revolutionary Tribunal at Seringapatam. On the 15th May the French assembled again for the ceremony of hoisting the National Flag, which opened with a salvo of artillery. After the ceremony Ripaud, who designated himself as the 'Representative of the French Nation at the Court of Prince Tipu', and a few prominent members went to the parade ground where the 'Citizen

Prince' was waiting for them. There was again a salvo of artillery to solemnise the mutual protestations of eternal friendship between Tipu and the French Republic, followed by the planting of the tree of Liberty. Ripaud made a discourse on the importance of the ceremony, and then asked every member of the Society to take an oath in the following terms, "Citizens, swear hatred to all Kings, except Tipoo Sultan, the Victorious, and the Ally of the French Republic; war to Tyrants, love for our Country and for that of Citizen Tippoo".[1]

Tipu, with an amazing political blindness, trusted in the bonafides of the French adventurer and decided to send an embassy to the Isle of France and from there to Paris, proposing an offensive and defensive alliance with France and seeking five to ten thousand French troops and twenty-five to thirty thousand Africans. Some of his wise ministers had the courage to warn him that the sending of the embassy could not be kept secret, and that its leakage would draw upon Tipu the immediate hostility of the English, with no possibility of getting any help from the French in time. But like a drowning man catching at a straw, Tipu persisted in his determination. To carry the envoys to the Isle of France Ripaud's boat was purchased, and in order to keep the object of the mission a secret, the boat carried a cargo of black pepper for the Isle of France and the envoys embarked in the guise of merchants. The envoys were entrusted with letters for the Governor and the executive authorities of the Isle of France as also for the Directory in Paris.[2]

Of the four persons selected for the embassy only two, Hussain Ali and Shaikh Ibrahim, actually started for the Isle of France, accompanied by a French watchmaker who had been living at Seringapatam and was appointed as an interpreter. They sailed from Mangalore on the 17th December 1797. Just before the party started, the conduct of Ripaud and his lieutenant, who absconded with money, created some suspicion

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[1] For details about the Jacobin demonstrations, see *Procès-Verbal des séances du club des Jacobins formé à Séringapatam* in Michaud's *Histoire des Progrès et de la chûte de l'empire de Mysore*, I pp. 251-276; also Castonnet des Fosses—*La Révolution et les clubs dans l'Inde Française.*

[2] Michaud, *op. cit.*, I, Pièces Justificatives—IV, pp. 277-291.

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in the mind of Tipu; but having proceeded so far he decided not to give up the idea of sending an embassy to the Isle of France. Ripaud was charged to take the envoys straight to their destination. But as soon as the French corsair was on the sea he treated the envoys very harshly, took away all their papers by force to see if they contained anything against him, demanded money from them, and even threatened to proceed to the Bombay Coast instead of to the Isle of France. At last after a painful voyage the envoys reached their destination on the 19th January 1798. That was the last they saw of Ripaud, with whom they had no further communication during their three months' stay in the Isle of France.

Tipu had enjoined on his envoys the maintenance of the strictest secrecy about their mission, and if the French Governor-General Malartic had the least political sense and consideration for the safety of the Indian Prince who sought his help, he should have avoided giving any publicity to it. As it was, in spite of the initial hesitation of the envoys, Malartic gave them a public and ceremonial reception, little caring to reflect how injurious it might prove to Tipu. The envoys had audience with the Governor-General several times, in which the latter gave them all assurances of help. Malartic confessed to the envoys that they had been wrongly informed by Ripaud about the strength of the land and naval forces in the Isles of France and Bourbon and that it was not possible to send any large-scale help at once. But he added that he was expecting reinforcements from France, that he would send Tipu's proposal to the Directory in Paris, and that in the meantime he could secure volunteers for Tipu's service. For this purpose he issued a public proclamation in the two Isles, stating the object of Tipu's embassy and calling upon citizens to enlist in Tipu's service, by which they would be doing a great patriotic duty and at the same time earning high salaries.

Tipu's envoys no doubt realised the danger of such a proceeding, but feeling perhaps that a greater danger threatened them if they failed to take back with them an adequate French force from the Isles, they agreed to it and even allowed the distribution of the leaflets containing Malartic's proclamation from the very house in which they were lodged. The proclamation, however, did not have much effect, not even a hundred men enlisting for Tipu's service. Among those who did were an army officer named Dubuc and a naval officer named Chapuis, who also posed to be vested with a political mission on behalf of the Government of the Isles. The open proclamation calling for volunteers was most indiscreet and served only to advertise to the world Tipu's secret overtures to the French. The Isle of France was frequented by neutral vessels. Copies of the proclamation reached Calcutta and London in June 1798, and that sealed the fate of Tipu.

It is difficult to understand Malartic's conduct in the whole affair. Either we have to attribute to him lack of the commonest political sense or we have to suppose that he was prompted mainly by a desire to impress the turbulent revolutionary elements, who held power in the Isles, by his patriotic fervour, and to divert their attention by giving them a cause which was both patriotic and financially profitable. One thing is certain. Malartic never really cared for what happened to Tipu. Although he despatched Tipu's proposal to Paris by two frigates on the 5th February 1798,[1] and although he secured some volunteers for Tipu's service, his real sentiments were expressed in a very rude letter to Tipu's envoys, when they objected to the payment of high salaries to the volunteers as fixed by Malartic and wanted the terms to be settled by Tipu. Malartic wrote to the envoys that Tipu could not expect officers and men on the same salaries as he had paid ten years earlier, nor could he expect the volunteers to go five hundred leagues and there to be informed about their salaries. Malartic brusquely declared that he had ordered the men not to disembark at Mangalore until Tipu accepted the terms settled by him. Then he added, "We have not at all sought for you; it is you who have come here to seek our help; therefore you must submit to the conditions that I propose".[2] That was hardly the language to be used about a Prince with whom an alliance was in contemplation.

Tipu's envoys started back from the Isle of France with the volunteers on the 7th March 1798 and reached Mangalore on the 26th April. Tipu must have been greatly disappointed at the result of his embassy. While he was expecting a large army, his envoys had brought less than a hundred volunteers and some letters from Malartic, the Governing Council in the Isle of France, Sercey commanding the French naval forces in the East, Magallon commanding the troops of the colony, Cossigny the ex-Governor-General and Descomber, the President of the Committee of Public Safety, all holding out empty assurances of help at some unspecified date. Even at that stage Tipu could have saved the situation by sending back the volunteers and repudiating the embassy in order to set English suspicions at rest. If he had thought that his overtures to the French were not known to the English, he should have understood the signs of the coming storm from the war preparations started by the Madras and Bombay Governments in June 1798 immediately on receipt of the news of Tipu's embassy in Calcutta.

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[1] Michaud—*Histoire des Progès et de la chûte de l'empire de Mysore*, I, pp. 290-291; letter from the governing authorities of the Isle of France to Tipu.

[2] *Ibid*, pp. 293-294.

In fact, the new Governor-General Wellesley had made up his mind in June,[1] as soon as he got authentic news of Tipu's overtures to the French, although it was not till November that he let Tipu know that he knew all about his embassy to the Isle of France.[2] This interval he employed for completing military and diplomatic preparations. It was not the Egyptian expedition of Napoleon Bonaparte with its potential threat to India, authentic news of which reached Calcutta on the 18th October, that determined Wellesley to move against Tipu. His course of action had been decided much earlier, merely on the basis of Tipu's embassy to the Isle of France. Wellesley's policy was clearly stated in a minute in the Secret Department, dated the 12th August 1798.[3] "The act of Tippoo's ambassadors, ratified by himself, and accompanied by the landing of a French force in his country, is a public, unqualified, and unambiguous declaration of war . . . . ."[4] "That he has not yet received the effectual succour which he has solicited, may be ascribed, either to the weakness of the Government of Mauritius, or to their want of zeal in his cause . . . . . but neither the measure of his hostility, nor of our right to restrain it, nor of our danger from it, are to be estimated by the amount of the force which he has actually obtained."[1]

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[1] Martin—*Despatches, Minutes and Correspondence of the Marquess Wellesley,* I, p. 64 (Mornington to General Harris, 20th June 1798) and p. 240 (Governor-General in Council to the Governor in Council, Fort St. George, 20th June 1798).

[2] *Ibid,* pp. 326-328 (letter dated 8th November).

[3] *Ibid,* pp. 159-208.

[4] *Ibid,* p. 172.

In dealing with Tipu Wellesley displayed a consummate diplomatic ability. Although he had made up his mind earlier, he never gave any hint to Tipu of his suspicion about his conduct till November, in order to draw the intended victim more securely into the net and to prevent Tipu from saving himself by a timely repudiation of his connections with the French. The time chosen for confronting Tipu with a disclosure of his overtures to the French was appropriate for his purpose, after the receipt of news of the Egyptian expedition of Napoleon Bonaparte and orders from London authorising Wellesley to take all precautionary measures.[2] He had now both the necessary authority to act and the reasonable hope that the presence of Napoleon Bonaparte in Egypt and the prospect of getting the expected help at last would prevent Tipu from repudiating his French connections and coming to terms with the English. It is difficult to say whether this was deliberately planned by Wellesley. Facts however fit in nicely with that supposition.

If it was the intention of Wellesley to lure Tipu to destruction, the latter simply played into his hands. When in November Wellesley wrote to Tipu, informing him of the French invasion of Egypt and the English naval victory at Aboukir,[3] and later announcing that he had full knowledge of Tipu's intrigues with the French,[4] Tipu was even then unwilling to throw up the French and receive an English envoy to settle the terms of a new treaty. For the next three months there was a fruitless exchange of correspondence between Seringapatam and Calcutta, the English trying to pin Tipu down to the vital decision, abandonment of the French connection or war, and

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[1] Martin—*Despatches, Minutes and Correspondence of the Marquess Wellesley*, I, p. 173.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 61-64. (Secret Committee of the Court of Directors to Mornington, 18th June 1798; received in Calcutta in September).

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 321-322 (letter dated 4th November).

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 326-328 (letter dated 8th November).

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Tipu trying to evade that issue by giving childish explanations about his overtures to the French, which did not deceive the English. Not till the very last did Tipu understand how earnest the English were about forcing the issue, or realise how imaginary were his hopes about French help. But when at last he woke up to the reality of the situation and agreed to accept an English envoy in February 1799, it was too late and the English armies were already on the march. The war which followed ended on the 4th May with the fall of Seringapatam and the death of Tipu in action.

V. *The Egyptian Expedition and French Plans about India.*

If the embassy to the Isle of France started Tipu's misfortune, it was completed by the Egyptian expedition of Napoleon Bonaparte. The advance of this daring general as far as Suez caused much greater alarm to the Governments of London and Calcutta than Malartic's proclamation, and made it an urgent necessity to crush Tipu before the possible arrival of a French force in India. In spite of the naval victory of Nelson, in spite of the lack of transport vessels at Suez to carry a French army to the Malabar Coast, and in spite of the known difficulties of the overland route to India, English anxiety about the threat to India was not dispelled till the final expulsion of the French from Egypt in 1801. It is beyond the scope of the present work to give a detailed account of the Egyptian expedition under Napoleon Bonaparte. We are here concerned with how far it was intended to affect, or could have affected, India. So we shall confine ourselves to a discussion of three questions only. How far was the expedition undertaken with the immediate object of proceeding to India? How far was an attack on India planned by the Directory? Finally, how far was such an attack really feasible?

As regards the first question, there is nothing to show that the expedition to Egypt was planned either by Napoleon Bonaparte or by the Directory with the immediate object of its proceeding to India. It is true that one of Napoleon's favourite dreams was a march to India, in imitation of the classical example. But when he set out from France or even when he occupied Egypt, he had no definite idea of proceeding to India either by the Red Sea route from Suez or by the overland route. After his conquest of Egypt he proceeded to Suez, but his activities there show that his plan was based on a long occupation of the country. He aimed at developing the Red Sea ports, attracting commerce and constructing ships. The measures he undertook in 1798-99 did not indicate any idea of an immediate maritime expedition to India, but only making preparations for it on the basis of a long occupation of Egypt. It is significant to notice his favourite expression in his letters to the Directory: "The Power which is mistress of Egypt must become, *in the long run*, the mistress of India as well".

It is true that in February 1799 Napoleon addressed a letter to Tipu, but his only object was to establish contact with Tipu and to know from him his actual situation. This letter, which was sent to the Sheriff of Mecca to be forwarded to Tipu, never reached the latter, but fell into the hands of the English at the port of Jedda. But it is so frequently cited as indicating Napoleon's definite plan of proceeding to India from Egypt that it is worthwhile to reproduce it in full. Napoleon wrote to Tipu: "You must already have been informed of my arrival on the coast of the Red Sea with a large and invincible army, filled with a desire to deliver you from the iron yoke of England. I hasten to let you know my desire that you send me, by way of Muscat or Mocha, news of the political situation in which you find yourself. I would further wish that you could send to Suez or to Cairo some intelligent person, possessing your confidence, with whom I could confer".[1] That was all that Napoleon wrote. There was no proposal in this celebrated letter of a French expedition to India. Napoleon promised nothing, but merely asked for information, preferably through a trusted agent of Tipu to be sent to Suez or Cairo. The study of the means by which his "invincible" army would contribute to the deliverance of Tipu "from the iron yoke of England" was obviously to be postponed till the arrival of Tipu's agent and was to be subject to the information that he would furnish.

In truth, Napoleon's Eastern projects centred round two dreams, an expedition to India and a conquest of the Turkish Empire. During his occupation of Egypt he had both these projects in mind. The existence of both at the same time shows that he had no precise plan of action. Both the projects were indeed mere figments of imagination, but the dreams persisted throughout his life. In 1798-99 he perhaps thought more of the Turkish project, but in his reminiscences at St. Helena he became more enamoured of his Indian dream. The prisoner of St. Helena recollected a plan of operations far different from what was in the mind of the conqueror of Egypt. In recalling the past, he thought that his plan was to proceed overland (and not by the Red Sea) from Egypt to India, reaching the Indus in four months, and that there was even a definite time-table,—conquest of Egypt from July 1798 to October 1799, and then march to India from November 1799 to February 1800. But it is interesting to note that in his reports to the Directory he made no mention of his projected invasion of India; and also that the Directory, if it had any plan at all, thought only of the Red Sea route. Finally, an expedition to India by any route entailed for Napoleon a long absence from Europe, which certainly was not in his contemplation at the time. All his letters from Cairo to his brother Joseph and to the Directory show that he was very eager to return to France early.[1]

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[1] Charles-Roux—*L'Angleterre et l'expédition Française en Egypte*, I, p. 256

As regards the second question, how far an attack on India was planned by the Directory as a sequel to the Egyptian expedition, the Directory did entertain such a project in a vague way, but never made any serious efforts to put into execution the preliminary measures necessary for the success of the enterprise. The Directory had indeed decided to establish contact with Tipu and had selected Piveron, who had been at his *Darbar* before, for the mission. But while Piveron should have been sent long before the Egyptian expedition started from Toulon, the Directory decided to send him with that expedition. As things turned out, Piveron could not start even then. He sailed from Toulon on the 16th August 1798 by a dispatch-boat the *Célère,* and then could not go beyond

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[1] Charles-Roux—*L'Angleterre et l'expédition Française en Egypte,* I, pp. 175-179.

Corfu.[1] Again, while the Egyptian expedition was decided upon, the Directory also took a decision to send orders to the Isles of France and Bourbon to despatch all frigates and transport vessels in the Isles to Suez, to reach there at the same time as the expeditionary force. But these orders probably never reached the Isles, and in any case no French ship went to Suez.[2] On the other hand, from a letter written by Talleyrand to Bonaparte, dated 4th November 1798, it would appear that the Directory had no definite plan about India, and had arranged nothing with Bonaparte when the expeditionary force sailed from Toulon. "A treaty is proposed between Tipu Sultan and the Isle of France. The Directory is sending you a copy. As this document is not signed, the Directory is not certain what degree of trust could be reposed in the proposals contained therein. The Citizen Louis Monneron is starting with a double mission, in which he is more competent than any one else, to attach more closely the African colonies to the mother country and to follow up the treaty proposed in the name of Tipu. If then your eyes turn towards India, Citizen Monneron will not fail to help you greatly."[3] It was just a very vague invitation to Bonaparte to "turn his eyes towards India", without furnishing him with any means for doing so. Probably after Nelson's victory, the Directory, unable either to send any help to Bonaparte or to extricate the expeditionary force from Egypt, fell back on the hope of Bonaparte's proceeding to India. As regards Monneron's mission to the Isle of France, it did not materialise after all. But even if Monneron had started, he could not have reached India in time to negotiate with Tipu; and even if he had reached in time, he could not have changed the course of events and saved Tipu. "What Tipu needed was not an ambassador but effective help, and that effective help the Directory was not in a position to offer him."[4]

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[1] Charles-Roux—*L'Angleterre et l'expédition Francaise en Egypte*, I, pp. 228.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 229.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 246. The treaty referred to was the proposal carried by Tipu's envoys to the Isle of France and forwarded from there by Malartic in March, as noticed already.

[4] *Ibid.*

As regards the third question, how far an attack on India was feasible, it is certainly not possible to give any definite answer. Perhaps, an attack by the land route was "nothing but a dream, a figment of imagination, an amusement of fancy".[1] But an attack by way of the Red Sea was possibly not so unreal, if the French had been able to move swiftly and make use of the surprise factor, that often decides the fate of a campaign. It should be noted that the news of the French expedition to Egypt did not reach Calcutta before the middle of October 1798, that till then the English fleet in the East had left the Red Sea ports completely unguarded, and that till the arrival of reinforcements at the beginning of 1799 the naval force under Rainier was extremely weak. When these things are considered, it is perhaps not very unreasonable to think that if the French had come to an understanding with Tipu before the expedition started from France, and if all available ships in the Isles of France and Bourbon, including those of the privateers, had been sent to Suez, to reach there exactly at the same time as the French army under Bonaparte, at least a large part of the expeditionary force could have been transported from Suez to Mangalore in safety. What would have happened if a French force under Napoleon Bonaparte had been landed at Mangalore before the end of 1798 is one of those "might-have-beens of history" which it is better to leave to speculation.

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[1] Charles-Roux—*L'Angleterre et l'expédition Française en Egypte*, I, p. 178.

CHAPTER XX

THE LAST PHASE OF ANGLO-FRENCH CONFLICT

1. *French Hopes in India after the Treaty of Amiens.*

The Egyptian expedition of 1798-1801 had no sequel, but Napoleon Bonaparte soon found an opportunity to turn his attention to India during the short-lived peace following the Treaty of Amiens. The Preliminaries of London, signed on the 1st October 1801, provided for the restoration to France and her allies of all their possessions and colonies occupied or conquered by the English in the course of the war, with the exception of Ceylon, belonging to the Dutch. It may be noted that following the establishment of French control over Holland, the English had promptly seized in 1795 all the Dutch possessions in India and Ceylon as also the Cape of Good Hope. Because of the strategic importance of Trinkomali they refused to return Ceylon to the Dutch, although they raised no objection to the return of the Cape, which was of even greater strategic importance, for which they had to repent later. Between the Preliminaries of London and the Treaty of Amiens, signed on the 25th March 1802, the First Consul made a few cautious approaches to find out the attitude of the English to the return of the French in India and their attempting to improve their position from what it had been before the war. During the stay of the English Plenipotentiary, Lord Cornwallis, in Paris, the First Consul expressed to him a desire to negotiate with an Indian Prince for the cession of some additional territories to the French, to which Cornwallis replied quite plainly that it would be viewed with great displeasure by the English and might ultimately lead to the breaking off of peaceful relations between the two nations.[1] The matter was dropped. But during the negotiations leading to the Treaty of Amiens the French Plenipotentiary, Joseph Bonaparte, was instructed to press for some specific stipulations in the treaty in relation to the French possessions in India, guaranteeing to the French their political and commercial rights. It was an indirect effort to improve the French position in India. The British negotiators were, however, insistent on a mere return to the *status quo ante bellum*. The French yielded on the point, as they were anxious for peace and were not inclined to jeopardise negotiations on the Indian issue.

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[1] Prentout—*L'Ile de France sous Decaen*, pp. 9-10.

Although the Treaty of Amiens did not answer to his expectations, the First Consul was not willing to give up all hopes about improving the French position in India. He was not inclined to take any rash step which would rouse English suspicions and endanger peace, but at the same time he wanted his agents to make secret military and diplomatic preparations in India which could be utilised by the French on the next outbreak of war. To him India was not sufficiently important to be worth risking a war with England, but he felt that when a war would break out on other issues, the French in India should be in a position to strike an effective blow. He realised the danger of sending out to India a large force, which would at once rouse the suspicion of the English. He decided instead to nominate an enterprising General to take charge of the Indian possessions, and to give him a large number of young officers, who would be able to train up a considerable body of sepoy force. For taking charge of the Indian possessions his choice fell on General Decaen, the young hero of the battle of Hohenlinden. The importance attached to the Indian enterprise by the First Consul was evident from the fact that he refused to give Decaen charge of the Isles of France and Bour bon as well, in order to make him devote his whole attention to India alone.

But while the First Consul was enthusiastic about the Indian enterprise, there was a growing realisation in France about the futility of attempting a revival of French political influence in India. The *Mémoire sur l'état Colonial de la France à l'époque de la paix d'Amiens,* written by the ex-Minister of Marine Forfait, clearly expressed the opinion that the French had no future in India and should realise that fact.[1] His successor as Minister of Marine, Decrès, in his report dated

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[1] Prentout—*L'Ile de France sous Deccan,* p. 14.

7th May 1802 expressed the same opinion and wanted a concentration of forces in the Isles of France and Bourbon, leaving the Indian possessions in their existing state.[1] Even Decaen, on receiving his appointment, drew up a *mémoire* on the same lines as Decrès.[2] This general lack of enthusiasm perhaps explains why Decaen's expedition did not start from France till twelve months after the signature of the Treaty of Amiens, with the result that it reached India when rumours of a resumption of hostilities had become current and the English prudently decided not to return the French possessions in India.

It was on the 15th February 1803 that Decaen received his instructions from the First Consul. He was advised to be very careful not to rouse the suspicions of the English, but to deal with them with tact and dissimulation. At the same time he was to establish secret contacts with the Indian Princes and to lay down plans for any future war. He was also to try to secure a strong base in India, to whatever nation it might belong, Portuguese, Dutch or English. Bonaparte's instructions ended thus: "The mission of the Captain-General is at first one of observation.....; but the First Consul, being kept well-informed by him and satisfied with the scrupulous execution of the preceding observations, may make it possible for him to acquire one day that glory which keeps alive the memory of men for centuries".[3] As will be seen, the First Consul forgot this assurance later and ignored all appeals from Decaen for timely reinforcements. Although Decaen was chosen by the First Consul, he started on his mission with an initial disadvantage, the intense dislike of the Minister of Marine, Decrès. It was because of the opposition of Decrès that the naval force under Linois, sent with the expedition, was not placed under Decaen's control. There was increasing jealousy between Decaen and Linois, who enjoyed the support and confidence of the Minister, and that contributed not a little to the failure of the French enterprise in the East.

The expedition started from Brest on the 5th March 1803. The naval force consisted of one ship of the line, the *Jean-*

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[1] Prentout—*L'Ile de France sous Decaen*, p. 15.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

Jacques Rousseau, renamed *Marengo;* three frigates, the *Atalante*, the *Belle-Pôule* and the *Sémillante;* and two transport vessels, the *Côte-d'Or* and the *Marie-Françoise*. Decaen had under him a corps of 1,250 men, a large proportion being young officers intended to train up a sepoy force in India. The English ambassador in Paris, Whitworth, promptly informed his Government about the large number of officers being sent out, indicating an ulterior motive on the part of the French.[1] There was also a corps of Africans recently arrived from Guadeloupe. So anxious was the French Government to avoid giving any cause for suspicion to the English, that Leger, who had previously served at Pondicherry as *Ordonnateur* was appointed *Préfet Colonial* in preference to a nephew of Dupleix, who had been first selected.

The *Belle-Poule*, which left the main expeditionary force during the voyage and sailed separately, reached Pondicherry on the 15th June 1803, the other ships arriving on the 11th July. On the *Belle-Poule* were Decaen's Adjutant, Binot, with 150 men and the *Préfet Colonial*, Leger. Binot carried with him Decaen's letter addressed to the Governor-General and to the Governor of Madras, authorising him to take possession of Pondicherry. But by the time of the arrival of the *Belle-Poule* at Pondicherry, there were already strong rumours of an imminent rupture between England and France, and so the English authorities in India decided to tactfully prolong negotiations with the French over the restoration of their territories till the receipt of more definite news from Europe. In fact, Wellesley never liked the Treaty of Amiens, providing for a restoration of French territories in India, and had expressed his misgivings about a possible return of the French in his letter to Dundas dated 28th February 1798.[2] The English Government also was in a wavering frame of mind. On the 5th May orders were sent out for the restitution of territories; on the 17th October counter-orders were sent, recommending delay;[3] and on the 16th November restitution was ordered again.[1] Wellesley, however, paid little heed to these orders, and thought only of the security of the English position in India. He issued instructions to the authorities at Madras to receive the French well when they came to Pondicherry, to treat them with cordiality, but to delay the restitution of territories until he was in a position to send definite orders.

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[1] Prentout—*L'Ile de France sous Decaen*, p. 29.

[2] Martin—*Despatches, Minutes and Correspondence of the Marquess Wellesley*, I, p. 31.

[3] *Ibid*, III, p. 72.

That was how matters stood when the *Belle-Poule* anchored before Pondicherry. Leger and Binot were received with every mark of honour by the English Commissioner, Cullen, and the officer commanding the English forces at Pondicherry. They were requested to land with all their men and were provided with suitable accommodation in the town. On the 19th June when the French disembarked, the officers were invited to a supper and a ball, and the English Commissioner even proposed a toast to the health of the First Consul. But with all these marks of cordiality, Binot was politely told by the English representatives that they had received no official instructions about the restitution of territories, that they would write to the Madras Government, and would hand over Pondicherry to the French as soon as orders came. Binot sent Decaen's letters to Madras. The Governor of Madras wrote to Wellesley on the 18th June about the arrival of the *Belle-Poule*. Wellesley received it on the 4th July, but on the 6th July he received a letter from Castlereagh, dated 16th March, informing him about the imminence of a rupture with France.[2] So on the 9th July Wellesley wrote to the Governor of Madras not only not to carry out the restoration of territories, but also to keep the English forces ready to be able to take all the French troops landed at Pondicherry prisoners as soon as he sent orders to that effect or the Governor of Madras came to know from other sources about the outbreak of war.[3]

Binot remained quite unaware of these moves of the English, although his suspicions were roused by the arrival of nine English ships at Cuddalore early in July, of which two came to anchor before Pondicherry when Decaen reached there with the rest of the French expeditionary force on the 11th July. Decaen was greatly surprised at seeing the English flag still flying over Pondicherry and two English ships anchored before it. He was irritated at Binot's conduct for not having pressed for the restitution of territories more strongly. Decaen at once sent the *Belle-Poule* to Madras, with a letter calling upon the Governor to arrange for an immediate restoration of Pondicherry. He himself refused to land with his force as long as the English flag flew over the town. In the afternoon of the same day the *Bélier,* coming straight from France, brought the information about the imminence of war, with instructions to Decaen to proceed at once to the Isle of France. As it turned out, the timely arrival of the *Bélier* saved the French expeditionary force from falling into the hands of the English. But Decaen was faced with a difficult situation. There were English ships before Pondicherry, and if the English also had received similar information they would certainly obstruct the departure of the French ships. An escape from Pondicherry in the darkness of the night was just possible, provided the closest secrecy could be maintained. It meant, however, leaving Binot and his men behind, since any attempt to re-embark the troops all on a sudden would rouse the suspicion of the English. Finally, the *Belle-Poule,* which had been sent to Madras, would have to be left behind, with the risk of its being captured by the English.

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[1] Martin--*Despatches, Minutes and Correspondence of the Marquess Wellesley*, III, pp. 98-99.

[2] *Ibid*, pp. 179-181.

[3] *Ibid*, pp. 183-185.

But all these considerations were nothing compared to the greater necessity of saving the expeditionary force from certain destruction by a timely escape from Pondicherry. Decaen decided to escape with the whole fleet the same night, as he feared that next day might be too late. He sent secret information to all the men on board the ships about his decision, but not a word to those who were on land. He could not even afford to send any warning to his wife, who had landed in the afternoon to pay a visit to Madame Leger and who, fortunately for her husband, returned to the ship in time. Leger, who had accompanied her to the ship, decided to escape, leaving his family behind. Binot was to dine with the English Commissioner that night. Instructions for him were left in a locked drawer, and it was just before the French ships sailed out that a man was sent ashore with the key of the drawer. Next morning Binot and his men were as much surprised as the English at the sudden disappearance of the French ships. The English were naturally disappointed that their intended victim had escaped so quietly. They tried to capture the *Belle-Poule* when it returned from Madras, but the French ship eluded pursuit and proceeded to the Isle of France. The transport vessel *Côte-d'Or* fell into the hands of the English, but was released on a strong protest from Binot, there being still no official news about the outbreak of war. On the 6th September, after official news of the war had reached Madras, the English seized another French transport vessel, the *Marie-Françoise,* at Negapatam.

The instructions left by Decaen for Binot were simply to the effect that if hostilities broke out, he was to try his best to secure an honourable capitulation. For nearly two months Binot found himself in an unenviable position, apparently at peace with the English and treated by them as before, and yet expecting an attack at any moment. He secretly sent agents to the ruler of Tanjore and also to the Maratha chiefs then at war with the English. The activities of these agents will be noticed later. At last on the 6th September the crisis came. The Government of Madras, immediately on receipt of the news of war, sent a detachment of infantry with a company of artillery under Colonel Monypenny to join the two companies of sepoys stationed at Pondicherry. For Binot, with his 150 men, resistance was out of the question; and yet, when summoned by Cullen and Monypenny to surrender at discretion, he adopted a spirited attitude. He protested that he had landed at Pondicherry on the faith of a treaty, and that his detachment should be repatriated to the Isle of France at the earliest possible opportunity. When Monypenny threatened that if the French did not obey the summons to surrender at discretion, he would order his troops to march in and attack, Binot gave a dignified reply that in that case he would spare the English half the distance by advancing himself with his men.

This courageous reply produced its effect, and the English agreed to permit Binot to send plenipotentiaries to Madras to settle the terms of capitulation with the Governor. Colonel Mainvielle and Captain Pariset were sent for the purpose. In the meantime Binot took advantage of the short respite to make preparations for resistance, and when that would no longer be tenable, he planned to move out of Pondicherry at night, capture the English magazine at Vilnoor by surprise, and then march to Tanjore, where he expected a good reception. On the 10th September an English ship, the *Shermess*, anchored before Pondicherry and landed more troops. On the same day the French plenipotentiaries returned from Madras, with a refusal from the Governor to Binot's demand for repatriation. The English made a fresh summons for surrender at discretion. Binot offered new terms of capitulation, hoping all the time that discussions would be prolonged till night, giving him an opportunity to execute his plan of retreating from Pondicherry and marching to Tanjore. The terms he proposed included according honours of war to the French and an assurance of their immediate repatriation to Europe. To his surprise the terms were accepted, and he had no more opportunity of putting his secret plan into execution.[1] On the 13th September the French detachment was taken to Madras, from where it was sent to the Cape of Good Hope. One of the officers, Delohr, went to the Isle of France to give an account of the capitulation to Decaen. Binot returned to Europe; he later distinguished himself in the battle of Austerlitz and died in action at Eylau.

II. *French Naval Activities in Indian Waters.*

The French expeditionary force, escaping from Pondicherry, reached the Isle of France on the 15th August. Towards the end of September the corvette *Berceau* brought official news of the resumption of hostilities and also an order from the First Consul, nominating Decaen as Captain-General of the Isles of France and Bourbon. Decaen promptly informed Magallon of this order, took over office from him, dismissed the Colonial Assembly, and set up a strong administration such as the Isles had not seen since the outbreak of the Revolution. After consolidating his authority in the Isles, Decaen turned his attention to the war against the English. With the small force at his disposal it was out of the question to undertake any enterprise against India, but there was a sizable naval division under Linois which could be employed for preying upon the merchant shipping of the enemy, until the arrival of reinforcements from Europe would permit taking the offensive against the English on a large scale. With one ship of the line and three frigates under Linois, it was possible for the French to inflict considerable damage to English trade and commerce, as the success of the privateers earlier had proved. But the timidity of Linois and his quarrels with Decaen ruined all chances of success and rendered French naval activities in Indian waters of little real consequence. Decaen put the entire blame on Linois, and the latter, disgusted with Decaen's conduct, left for Europe without any authority towards the end of 1805, suffering the capture of his two ships by the English in March 1806. The naval division sent in 1803 thus ceased to exist.

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[1] P A. ms. 2233—Binot's letter to Decaen, 21st October 1803.

With the expeditionary force under Decaen and Linois came also Cavaignac as French Resident at the Court of the Imam of Muscat. The First Consul, since the Egyptian expedition, entertained the idea of establishing French political influence in the Persian Gulf (necessary for an eventual project on India) through the Imam. On the 14th September 1803, a few days before the news of the resumption of hostilities was known in the Isle of France, Cavaignac started for Muscat on board the frigate *Atalante*. By the time he arrived at Muscat on the 3rd October, news of the outbreak of war had reached there. Since the Egyptian expedition the English had also been trying to establish their influence in the region of the Persian Gulf. Thus when Cavaignac arrived, the Imam under English pressure refused to have any dealings with the French.[1] The French mission promptly returned to the Isle of France, from where Cavaignac went back to Europe about the middle of 1804.

On the 8th October 1803 Linois sailed from Port Louis in the Isle of France with the remaining ships of his division,—the *Marengo*, the *Belle-Poule*, the *Sémillante* and the corvette *Berceau*, leaving instructions for the *Atalante* to join him at Batavia after returning from Muscat. The French squadron was sent to Batavia to warn the Dutch of the resumption of hostilities, to carry some reinforcements of troops for them from the Isle of France, and also to secure the co-operation of their fleet for a combined action against the English, particularly to capture the rich China convoy of the English Company expected to start from Canton in January 1804. Linois, however, on his way to Batavia attacked the English establishment at Bencoolen on the southern coast of Sumatra, capturing two vessels, burning a few others and inflicting considerable damage on the English. But this action was most unwise, since it warned the English of the presence of a hostile squadron in those waters, while secrecy was essential for the success of the main enterprise against the China convoy. On the 12th December the French squadron reached Batavia, found the Dutch in an uncooperative mood, and then sailed for the Straits of Malacca to lie in wait there for the China convoy. On the 14th February 1804, while the French were off Pulo Aor, they sighted 27 English vessels. It was the expected China convoy, proceeding unescorted and without any suspicion of danger. If Linois had not suddenly lost his judgment, he could easily have captured the entire convoy, with a cargo worth £200,000. Captain Dance, commanding the convoy, surprised by the presence of the French squadron, took recourse to a ruse which succeeded completely. He put up the blue flag of the Royal Navy (instead of the red of the merchant marine) on three large ships to give the impression that the convoy was being escorted by ships of the line. Linois was fully deceived by this ruse and by the confidence with which the convoy steadily proceeded on its course. Believing that he was confronted by superior enemy forces, he precipitately fled away after a short exchange of fire.[1] This encounter was rightly celebrated by the English as a great victory. Captain Dance was created a peer and given a sword of honour and a large sum of money. The English Company distributed £50,000 among the officers and men of the convoy.

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[1] Prentout—*L'Ile de France sous Decaen*, pp. 336-338.

From Pulo Aor Linois returned to Batavia and was joined by the *Atalante* there. Leaving the *Belle-Poule* and the *Atalante* to prey upon English merchant shipping in the Bay of Bengal,

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[1] Chevalier—*Histoire de la Marine Française sous le Consulat et l'Empire*, pp. 296-298; Prentout—*L'Ile de France sous Decaen*, pp. 350-354.

Linois started from Batavia on the 4th March with the *Sémillante* and the *Berceau* and reached the Isle of France on the 1st April. Although during the cruise to Batavia and back Linois had captured a few vessels, Decaen was indignant at his timidity and his failure to capture the China convoy. There broke out a violent quarrel between Decaen and Linois. Both of them sent reports to France. Decrès, the Minister of Marine, was inclined to shield his protégé, Linois, but the Emperor was furious. He wrote to Decrès, "All the naval expeditions which have been undertaken since I have been at the head of the Government have always failed because the Admirals see double and imagine, I do not know how, that one could make war without running any risk". In another letter he wrote, "The least reproach that may be made to Admiral Linois is that he put too much prudence in the preservation of his ships. Warships are not merchant vessels. It is honour that I would like to be preserved, and not a few pieces of wood and some men".[1]

The affair of Pulo Aor had such a depressing effect on Linois that he completely lost confidence in himself, and during the remainder of his stay in the East he did not go beyond a few infructuous cruises. He started on his second cruise on the 20th June 1804, with the *Marengo*, the *Atalante* and the *Sémillante*, returning to the Isle of France on the 31st October. A few merchant vessels were captured, but the only remarkable event during this cruise was the encounter with an English man-of-war, the *Centurion* (60) in the road of Vizagapatam on the 18th September. Linois failed to make use of his opportunities and to capture the English ship, which would have strengthened his fleet.[2]

Relations between Linois and Decaen became increasingly bitter, each sending complaints to the Minister against the other. On the 22nd May 1805 Linois left on his third cruise, with no intention of returning to the Isle of France any more. He had with him only the *Marengo* and the *Belle-Poule*. The *Sémillante* had been sent to the Philippines to inform the Spanish authorities there about the outbreak of war between England and Spain. The *Atalante* was undergoing repairs, and was to join Linois at the Cape of Good Hope at the end of September. On the 11th July Linois captured a large vessel of the English Company, the *Brunswick,* off the Ceylonese coast, and then learning that the English had considerable forces in those waters, sailed for the Cape. On the way Linois met an English convoy of ten Company's vessels, escorted by the *Blenheim* (74), off the east coast of Africa. After a short engagement with the *Blenheim,* Linois thought it prudent to sail off to the Cape. There he was joined by the *Atalante,* but it was run aground in the False Bay, where the French ships had anchored, by a violent storm on the 3rd November. On the 10th November Linois left the Cape with his two ships to cruise off the western coast of Africa. Towards the end of January 1806, learning of the capture of the Cape by the English, he decided to return to France. On the 13th March the two French ships met an English fleet off the Canaries and were compelled to surrender after a brief encounter.[1]

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[1] The two letters are quoted in Chevalier—*Histoire de la Marine Française sous le Consulat et l'Empire*, pp. 299-300.

[2] Chevalier, *op. cit.*, p. 301; Prentout—*L'Ile de France sous Decaen*, p. 363.

With the exception of one frigate, the *Sémillante,* the French naval division sent out in 1803 had disappeared. France, starting on a fresh career of European conquest, evinced little serious interest in Eastern projects and practically left Decaen to his fate in the Isle of France. From time to time the Emperor showed spasmodic interest, and even laid down grandiose plans of sending expeditions to India both by land and by sea. But his enthusiasm soon cooled down, as his attention was diverted by a fresh European crisis. After 1803 all the naval reinforcements sent to the East were five frigates, the *Canonnière* and the *Piémontaise* despatched in 1805, and the *Caroline,* the *Manche* and the *Vénus* despatched in 1807. After the departure of Linois, the naval direction remained in the hands of Decaen, who constructed a few small boats and purchased for the State some ships belonging to privateers, to strengthen the forces at his disposal for commerce-raiding operations. There was more vitality in these operations under Decaen's direction than in the earlier period. Between 1805 and 1809 the French captured quite a large number of prizes in the Eastern waters and even displayed great courage in a few encounters with superior enemy forces. It will be, however, a tedious narrative to attempt to give an account of their activities in detail, which really did not affect much the main course of the war or even prevent the closing in of the English ring round the French Isles.

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[1] Chevalier—*Histoire de la Marine Française sous le Consulat et l'Empire,* pp. 303-306; Prentout—*L'Ile de France sous Decaen,* pp. 366-367.

One instance of heroic conduct on the part of the French was the stubborn fight given by their frigate *Psyché* (an old privateering vessel converted into a frigate by Decaen) to the much stronger English frigate *San Fiorenzo* off Ganjam in the Bay of Bengal on the 14th February 1805.[1] The *Psyché* surrendered, but not before covering the French flag with glory. We have noticed that Linois had left the *Atalante* at the Cape. It fell into the hands of the English, when they captured the place in January 1806. The *Sémillante* on its return from the Philippines was attacked without success by two English ships, the *Sceptre* (74) and the *Cornwallis* (40), in the road of St. Paul in the Isle of Bourbon on the 11th November 1806. Later it went out on a cruise, captured several prizes, and being badly damaged in a fight with the English frigate *Terpsichore* (40) in February 1808 was scrapped and sold to private merchants. Of the frigates sent out in 1805, the *Canonnière* reached the Isle of France at the beginning of 1806. Wanting to join the division under Linois, it started for the Cape, not knowing that the place had been captured by the English. On the way, off Natal, it had a sharp encounter with an English ship of the line, the *Tremendous* (74), on the 20th April. When he reached the Cape, Captain Bourayne of the *Canonnière* found the Dutch flag still flying. But as soon as he anchored in the Simon's Bay, the Dutch flag was replaced by the English, and a heavy fire was opened on the French ship. It was, however, lucky enough to escape and return to the Isle of France. Not so fortunate was another French frigate, the *Volontaire*, which anchored unsuspectingly in the Table Bay on the 4th March, and was then attacked and compelled to surrender. The two frigates, the *Canonnière* and the *Piémontaise,* which reached the Isle of France at the beginning of 1806 remained in service for about two years, the second being captured after an engagement with the English frigate *San Fiorenzo* off the south coast of Ceylon in March 1808, and the first being scrapped and sold to private merchants. In March and April 1808 arrived two more frigates, the *Manche* and the *Caroline,* which also engaged in commerce-raiding operations. But by the beginning of 1809 French activities were being gradually restricted by the tightening of the English blockade of the Isles and the strict watch maintained by the English on their ports. By 1810 the French were put on the defensive, and the inevitable crisis approached.[1]

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[1] Chevaller—*Histoire de la Marine Française sous le Consulat et l'Empire*, pp. 301-303; Prentout—*L'Ile de France sous Decaen*, pp. 367-370.

III. *French Agents in India and Decaen's Project of Invasion.*

The employment of all available ships in the Isles for commerce-raiding operations Decaen considered as a purely temporary phase, the ultimate object being an invasion of India as soon as adequate reinforcements arrived from Europe. From the moment of his arrival in the Isle of France Decaen started collecting information about the political situation in India, the possibility of landing an expeditionary force and the chances of securing allies among the country Powers. Both he and his Adjutant, Binot, at Pondicherry employed a number of secret agents for the purpose. But these agents could hardly go far. The situation in India had changed completely from the days of Chevalier and Madec, when the French could hope to establish a network of intrigues in the different *Darbars.* Before 1803 all the Indian Powers had been destroyed, with the exception of the Marathas, and the Maratha Power was also on the point of extinction when Decaen arrived at Pondicherry. Events were moving fast, and the army of Perron in Sindhia's service, on which Decaen had banked, had melted away months before Decaen sent emissaries from Port Louis to that French adventurer. The English were very much alert and all the French secret agents were arrested. The reports that these agents sent to Decaen were mostly a ridiculous composition of ignorance of the Indian situation and wishful thinking. The French agents were quite confident of large help from many of the Indian Princes, not knowing their real position and the paucity of their resources. Their letters were frequently intercepted by the English and served only to let the English know which of the country Powers had to be kept under close observation. One thing is certain. The intrigues of these French agents could not have caused any harm to the English, and any French attempt at invasion of India with a few thousand troops, based on these reports, would have ended in disaster.

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[1] For details of French naval activities after the departure of Linois, see Chevalier—*Histoire de la Marine Française sous le Consulat et l'Empire,* pp. 307-315; and Prentout—*L'Ile de France sous Decaen,* pp. 496-505.

During his stay at Pondicherry Binot had entered into secret relations with some of the country Powers, and had set up an espionage organisation which lasted long after his departure from India. He received emissaries from the rulers of Travancore and Tanjore and from some of the Poligars of south India. A few days before his capitulation at Pondicherry he also received a Brahmin agent from Sindhia, who came to solicit the French to land an expeditionary force on the Malabar Coast, between Bombay and Goa, with a promise of assistance from the Marathas. Binot, on his side, sent an officer, Muller, on a secret mission to Sindhia's Court, and another officer, Dufayel, to take up his residence at Tranquebar as French official agent and to send secret reports to Decaen from that neutral port. The first report that Binot sent to Decaen was through Delohr, who was sent to the Isle of France after the capitulation at Pondicherry. Delohr drew a very rosy picture, depicting the whole of India in revolt against the English and ready to welcome the French. On the basis of these reports Decaen drew up a detailed plan of attack and sent it to the French Government. An expeditionary force was to land on the Malabar Coast, preferably at Chaul. It was then to capture either Bombay or Goa, to secure a safe shelter for French ships. To ensure the success of this operation, there was to be a simultaneous attack on the Orissa Coast and also a diversion in the Mediterranean to keep the English busy in Europe. Decaen felt confident of getting substantial help from the Marathas, and for the success of the enterprise wanted only four thousand troops, six ships of the line, two flûtes and four frigates.[1]

Muller had started on his mission to Sindhia's Court in July 1803. In addition to being a good painter, Muller was a linguist, speaking English, German and Italian with ease and having some knowledge of Persian and Hindusthani as well. With only a hundred rupees in his pocket, all the money that Binot could give him, and his painting box, he went to Madras where he passed off as a German painter. From there he started in August, and after an adventurous voyage he reached Calcutta at the end of September. His plan was to proceed to Lucknow and then to Perron's headquarters at Aligarh. But when he reached Calcutta he heard the news of the defeat and destruction of Perron's army. It was no use going to Sindhia's camp, and, besides, Muller had spent all his money. He gave himself up as a French officer, was kept interned in Calcutta for a few years, and then sent back to France in 1807. Even in detention Muller kept on collecting information and communicating with other French agents at Chandernagore and Serampore. At the time of leaving India he could send to Decaen in the Isle of France a very detailed *mémoire* on the political situation in the country and the means required for the success of a French expedition. He submitted a similar *mémoire* to Talleyrand also.[2]

After getting the encouraging reports of Delohr, in November 1803 Decaen decided to send two emissaries, Courson and Durhône, to India to establish contact with Perron and through him to open negotiations with the Maratha Princes for a combined attack on the English. Decaen did not know that Perron's army had already melted away and that Perron himself was at the time an English prisoner. The two officers, Courson and Durhône, were entrusted with letters for Perron, Sindhia and Holkar. To Sindhia and Holkar Decaen held out assurances of French armed assistance and the alliance of the French Republic. To Perron he wrote, urging him to persuade the Maratha Prince to remain favourably inclined towards an alliance with France pending the despatch of French forces. He made a rather melodramatic appeal to Perron's ambition and spirit of patriotism, by telling him how he could achieve immortality by cementing a Franco-Maratha alliance and sending him a medal with an engraving of the First Consul's image and a *brévet* nominating him to the rank of 'General of a Division in the Army of the French Republic'.

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[1] Prentout—*L'Ile de France sous Decaen*, pp. 378-379.

[2] Besson—*Les Aventuriers Français aux Indes* (1775-1820), pp. 232-234 (for career of Muller).

The two French officers, accompanied by one Doublet who had been a merchant in India before, started from the Isle of France on the 9th November 1803 on a small boat, the *Passe-Partout*, captained by the noted privateer Dutertre. They reached the Malabar Coast early in January 1804 and landed at a point between Goa and Bombay. They had instructions to proceed inland in Indian guise, but before they could go far they were detected and examined by one of the local chiefs. Ultimately, they reached Poona and were handed over by the Maratha authorities to the English, who knew all about them, having seized their boat and being on the look out for the party which had landed. They were taken first to Bombay and then to Calcutta, from where Courson and Durhône were released in exchange shortly after. Dutertre was detained longer, for his depredations on English trade and commerce. The net effect of the mission was to warn Wellesley of the plans of Decaen.

Another agent of Decaen, Morenas, had slightly better luck. Starting from the Isle of France about the same time as Courson and Durhône, Morenas reached the Danish settlement of Tranquebar, where through the help of Dufayel he secured a passage to Bengal. He stayed for a time at Chandernagore and then returned to the Isle of France. During his stay in Bengal he could contact Courson, Durhône and Muller and could collect much information, which he sent on to Decaen with the help of Dufayel. On the 2nd April 1804 Morenas sent discouraging reports to Decaen. The English had won in the recent war with the Marathas. Perron had abandoned Sindhia and Bourquin had been defeated at Delhi. The Maratha Princes had concluded treaties with the English and sunk into the position of subsidiary allies. Morenas attributed the success of the English to the treachery of Perron and Dudrenec. These two men, as also Piron who had married a daughter of Dudrenec, "were all at Chinsurah, three Frenchmen who have done more to injure the interests of France and to advance those of the English Company than the English themselves".[1] Morenas still did not despair, but thought that there were good chances of success if Decaen came with a large force.

We have noticed already that Binot had sent Dufayel to Tranquebar to reside there as French agent. Dufayel was later confirmed in his post by Decaen, with a large salary and instructions to subscribe to the *Madras Gazette* for collecting information. Tranquebar, being a neutral settlement, was a convenient point of observation for the French. The English were quite aware of the use the French made of this oportunity. Wellesley had complained to the Danish Governor Anker in January 1799,[2] and had sent an English agent to Tranquebar in December 1800 to watch French intrigues.[3] After the Peace of Amiens English influence at Tranquebar became very strong. As Morenas reported in 1805 during his second visit to Tranquebar, only the flag was Danish, everything else was under English control.[4] Finally, in 1807 after the declaration of war by Denmark following the English attack on the Danish fleet at Copenhagen, Tranquebar was captured by the English. The French lost their only place of shelter in India. During his stay at Tranquebar Dufayel carried on his espionage work and sent regular reports to Decaen. In 1804 Dufayel wrote that the situation in India was quite favourable for the French, and that if Decaen came with a force of 10,000 men he could land at Pulicat and easily capture Madras.[5] Many of Dufayel's letters were intercepted by the English and served only to disclose to them the network of French intrigue. After the capture of Tranquebar Dufayel was arrested and sent back to France.[1]

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[1] Prentout—*L'Ile de France sous Decaen*, pp. 385-386

[2] Martin—*Despatches, Minutes and Correspondence of the Marquess Wellesley*, V, pp. 36-40 (letter dater 18th January 1799).

[3] *Ibid*, II, pp. 418-419 (Wellesley to the Governor of Madras, 1st December 1800).

[4] Besson—*Les Aventuriers Français aux Indes* (1775-1820), p. 234.

[5] Prentout, *op. cit.*, p. 388.

From the moment of getting the earliest reports from India Decaen began to write pressing letters to the Minister and to the First Consul, outlining a plan of invasion and asking for adequate land and naval forces. In order to impress on the authorities in Paris the urgency of the situation he even sent successive emissaries to France. The first was his aide-de-camp, Barois, who arrived in France on the 25th March 1804.[2] Barois, however, found the First Consul too busy with preparations for an invasion of England to turn his attention to India. Next came Cavaignac, who returned to Paris on the 12th July after the failure of his mission to Muscat. He found the attitude of Decrès with respect to Decaen's proposals very cold and that of Napoleon also not at all encouraging.[3] On the 8th September 1804 arrived a third emissary, Lefebvre. During his interview, Napoleon questioned him closely about the chances of success in India with so few men as asked for by Decaen, and expressed grave doubts about the sincerity of the Marathas.[4] Lefebvre drew up a detailed *mémoire* on the Indian project, which did not rouse much interest in Napoleon at the time. But from the beginning of 1805 there was a sudden change in Napoleon's mind. In a letter to the Minister of Marine, Decrès, dated 16th January 1805, Napoleon suggested a plan of sending an expedition to India. Three squadrons, starting from Brest, Rochefort and Ferrol, were to carry 20,000 French and 3,000 Spanish troops and they were to be joined by 3,000 from the Isles of France and Bourbon.[5] Decrès raised objections to the plan. When the fourth emissary from Decaen, his own brother René Decaen, arrived and met the Emperor in July, he found that Napoleon had by then completely abandoned the Indian project. The expedition to England was more important, and war clouds were again gathering on the Continent.[1] Napoleon was to come back to the Indian project in 1807-8, after obtaining complete mastery on the Continent. Till then the Indian project could lie in cold storage. During these years Decrès deceived Decaen by writing favourable letters, requesting him to continue to furnish more details about India, and assuring him of reinforcements in the near future.

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[1] Besson—*Les Aventuriers Français aux Indes* (1775-1820); p. 235; Prentout—*L'Ile de France sous Decaen*, p. 444. Decaen's letters to Dufayel are to be found in P. A. mss. 2236-2248.

[2] Prentout, *op. cit.*, pp. 391-392.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 395.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 398-400.

[5] *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, X, 8279.

The Indian project, as revived in 1807-8, was not the same as laid down in 1805. In 1805 the expedition was intended to be sent by sea via the Cape of Good Hope, still in Dutch hands. In 1807-8 the expedition was planned to follow the land route to India, through the Turkish Empire, Persia and Afghanistan. The basis of the plan was provided by the Treaty of Finkenstein with Persia, which will be noticed in the next section. But the project of an expedition by the sea-route was not altogether abandoned. It was to be attempted, although on a smaller scale than what was planned in 1805 and only as subsidiary to the main expedition by land. Such combined attacks were deemed necessary to ensure success. On the 16th July 1807 Decrès wrote to Decaen, informing him of the conclusion of the Treaty of Finkenstein and of the mission of General Gardane to Persia, and requesting him to co-operate with Gardane.[2] Decaen sent his younger brother again to France to urge the importance of an expedition by sea. René Decaen arrived in Paris in January 1808, and by his persuasive skill struck the imagination of Napoleon and revived his old enthusiasm for a maritime expedition. Napoleon was converted to the acceptance of a plan based on simultaneous invasions by land and sea, with an attack on Egypt as a diversion. In April 1808 he woke up to the necessity of improving the condition of the navy, left neglected since 1805, and rebuked Decrès for not having sent any reinforcements to the Isles of France and Bourbon.[3]

In reviving the idea of sending an expedition by sea Napoleon did not draw up as grandiose a project as in 1805, but one more practicable. He outlined his plan in his letter to Decrès dated 13th May.[1] Twenty ships carrying 4,000 troops were to start from Lorient in October and make for the Isle of France, to be followed later by another twenty ships from Brest with 12,000 troops. At the same time the fleet at Toulon was to land 20,000 men in Egypt. In successive letters to the indolent Minister of Marine he urged him to draw up details on the basis of the general plan and make all necessary preparations for the despatch of the expedition.[2] On the 10th June Napoleon gave precise instructions: 12 ships were to start from Nantes, 13 from Lorient and 31 from Brest, carrying a total of 19,600 soldiers and 10,600 sailors.[3] But while even the indolent Minister had been stirred into activity by the exhortations of the Emperor, the whole plan was upset by the national rising in Spain. Napoleon's attention was again diverted to the European situation, and he never got another opportunity to revive his project regarding India. It is not surprising that faced with the grave crisis in Spain, Napoleon should have abandoned the project of an expedition to India. What was really strange was that he neglected to take even ordinary measures to ensure the safety of the Isles of France and Bourbon. All that was done in 1808 was to send two frigates with a hundred troops only. For the rest Decaen was left to his fate.

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[1] Prentout—*L'Ile de France sous Decaen,* p. 410.

[2] *Ibid.,* p. 460.

[3] *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier,* XVII, 13748 (16th April 1808), 13852 (11th May 1808), 13872 (12th May 1808).

IV. *The Treaty of Finkenstein and the Mission of General Gardane to Persia.*

We may turn next to the main basis of Napoleon's project on India in 1807-8 namely an alliance with Persia, which would provide a safe land route for the march of the French army to India. It may be noted at the outset that Napoleon's Eastern policy was never characterised by either consistency or clarity of vision. His ideas were always vague, taking different shapes at different times and containing elements entirely contradictory. At one time he thought of an alliance with the Turkish Empire and Persia, directed against Russia. At another time he thought of an alliance with Russia, Turkey and Persia, directed against the English power in India. Later again, he thought of an alliance with Russia and Persia, directed against both Turkey and the English in India. Nor did he see the apparent contradiction in all the three schemes. Traditional enmity between Turkey and Persia, between Russia and Turkey, and between Persia and Russia made it impossible to build any stable system of alliance with either Turkey and Persia, or with Russia and Turkey, or with Persia and Russia. In trying to use these three Powers as pawns on his chessboard to serve his own purpose for the moment, Napoleon could never understand that these Powers also could be interested in their own objectives. Talleyrand, who had a better sense of diplomacy, realised this and warned Napoleon of the futility of an alliance with Persia, but all the same he could not prevent the conclusion of the Treaty of Finkenstein in May 1807.

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[1] *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, XVII, 13877.

[2] *Ibid.*, 13915 (17th May 1808), 13960 (22nd May), 13981 (25th May), 14022 (29th May), 14025 (30th May).

[3] *Ibid.*, 14078.

It is difficult to say which side made the first overtures for an alliance, France or Persia. It is quite probable, as Edouard Driault suggests,[1] that the initiative came from the side of Persia, and that the process of drawing Franco-Persian relations closer, which ended in the Treaty of Finkenstein, started with a letter from the Persian Shah Fath Ali to Napoleon, written in December 1804, and a letter from the chief minister Mirza Shafi to Talleyrand, written somewhat later. Persia needed help against both Russia and Turkey, and naturally looked to the rising Power of the West for an alliance. Napoleon at first was not much favourably inclined, but he sent nevertheless two agents, Romieu and Jaubert, to Persia in 1805 to collect information, followed by several other agents. Romieu reached Teheran in October 1805 and died there of illness, while Jaubert, who had reached Teheran in July 1806, returned to the Imperial Camp at Warsaw on the 8th February 1807, the day of the battle of Eylau. Jaubert had been preceded by an ambassador, Mirza Riza Khan, sent by the Persian Shah, with whom Napoleon, now anxious to create a diversion on the south-eastern frontier of Russia, had entered into negotiations.

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[1] Driault—*La Politique Orientale de Napoléon : Sebastiani et Gardane* (1806-1808), pp. 172-173.

On the 4th May 1807, on the eve of the battle of Friedland, Napoleon concluded the Treaty of Finkenstein. He guaranteed the integrity of Persian territory, recognised Persia's claim to Georgia, and engaged to secure the evacuation of Georgia by Russian troops. He also agreed to supply arms to Persia and to send a military mission to train up the Persian army. On his side, the Shah of Persia engaged to break off relations with England and declare war on her. All Englishmen were to be expelled from Persia, and the Shah was to use his influence to secure the co-operation of the Afghan chiefs in an attack on India. Finally, he was to provide all help and facilities in his ports to a French naval squadron.[1] The treaty was based either on a deliberate diplomatic deception or on a refusal to recognise patent facts. Even before Friedland Napoleon was already thinking of peace and alliance with Russia, which, he should have known, would render that part of the Treaty of Finkenstein nugatory which alone was important to the Persians and only for which the Persians could be induced to break off relations with the English. When after long expectation the Persians found out that France had no intention of honouring her commitment in relation to Georgia, they welcomed the English mission under Sir Harford Jones and concluded a treaty with England.

General Gardane, selected to head the mission to Teheran, was given detailed instructions by Napoleon about how he was to prepare the ground for an expedition against India.[2] The expeditionary force of 20,000 troops might either proceed overland from Aleppo or might be carried by ships round the Cape and landed at the entrance to the Persian Gulf. There they were to be joined by Persian troops, to be trained by Gardane's officers. Gardane was to collect all information about the countries on the border of India, study all possible routes to the Indus, procure necessary supplies, and chalk out a plan of campaign. He was to communicate with the Marathas and

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[1] Gardane—*La Mission du Général Gardane en Perse*, p. 71.

[2] *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, XV, 12563.

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other Indian Powers and find out the amount of help that could be expected in India. Gardane started from Warsaw on the 8th June, with a large staff of military officers, archaeologists and geographers. The Persian envoy, Mirza Riza Khan, accompanied him. It was at Constantinople that Gardane got the news of the Treaty of Tilsit; which filled him with misgivings about the prospects of his mission. He reached Teheran on the 4th December and was very well received by the Shah. The Treaty of Finkenstein was ratified. A military and a commercial convention were concluded. By the first the Shah was to purchase from France 20,000 muskets and was to place the island of Karrak at the disposal of the French.

Gardane's mission was primarily military, to train up the Persian army and to draw up a plan of invading India. Two of his officers, Verdier and Lamy, did very good work in training up the troops under Prince Abbas Mirza, while another officer, Fabvier, was entrusted with establishing a foundry at Ispahan and casting cannons. Fabvier started work in February 1808, and in five months he cast more than twenty cannons. Gardane also drew up a detailed plan of march to the Indus. If the land route was to be followed, the French force was to start from Aleppo in March, proceed to Bir on the Euphrates, and then to advance by way of Baghdad, Basra, Bushire, Shiraz and Yezd to Herat. But the road was bad for heavy artillery, and, besides, the English could land troops on the coast of the Persian Gulf. It was better to proceed from Baghdad to Urfa, Hamadan, Khorasan and Herat. By this route it would take seven to eight months from Aleppo to the Indus. If it was possible to cross the Black Sea and land at Trebizond, a part of the army could proceed via Erzerum, Van, Hamadan and Yezd to Herat, and another by the Taurus mountains, Teheran and Khorasan to Herat. The march from Trebizond to the Indus would take five to seven months. Herat would be an excellent point of concentration. From there the road to Kabul and Peshawar was easy. Gardane felt confident of the assistance of the tribal people in the Indus region, of the Sikhs and of the chiefs of Sind. Success appeared to be certain, if simultaneously with the invasion from the north Decaen could land

1,500 Créoles near Bombay.[1] But the whole plan was based on unreal foundations. "It was nothing but a dream and a chimera, and the reason was simple. The French alliance gave to the King of Persia nothing of what he had hoped for, and did not even save him from Russian aggression. It soon appeared to him useless and odious, and before long Gardane found himself up against insurmountable difficulties".[2]

These difficulties began to appear from the middle of 1808. At first the Shah of Persia, his chief minister, Mirza Shafi, and Prince Abbas Mirza were favourably inclined to the French alliance, with the obligations it involved. In May 1808 the English mission from India under Malcolm was not received by the Persian Court. But it soon dawned on the Persians that the French had no intention of honouring their commitments in respect of Georgia, and then they naturally turned their backs on the French and looked to the English for assistance. Hostilities between Russia and Persia ceased in February 1808, but the Russian General wanted to impose on Teheran a treaty retaining Georgia to Russia. The Shah of Persia sought the intervention of France and wanted Russo-Persian negotiations to be carried on in Paris. Pending the conclusion of the negotiations, there was to be a cessation of hostilities for a year. But Russia refused to agree, and the French Government also was not inclined to offer mediation. Gardane was placed in a very embarrassing situation. The Persian Government lost patience in August 1808, and the chief minister, Mirza Shafi, addressed a memorandum to him in very plain language, complaining that while Persia was fulfilling the terms of the alliance, France was doing nothing to restrain Russia. The crisis came in September, when the Russian General threatened to resume hostilities unless Persia accepted Russian terms immediately. Persia again appealed to the French Government, but there was no favourable response from Paris, except empty professions of friendship which exasperated the Persians. Gardane was informed by his Government that the Treaty of Finkenstein did not guarantee the recovery of the possession of Georgia, and

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[1] Driault—*La Politique Orientale de Napoléon : Sebastiani et Gardane* (1806-1808), pp. 318-319.

[2] *Ibid*, p. 320.

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that he was to bring about a compromise between Russia and Persia without any embarrassing commitment for France. Later, after the outbreak of the Spanish War, Gardane was informed that France could not think of Persia at the moment and that he was to extricate himself from the difficulty of his situation as best as he could.

Russo-Persian hostilities were resumed in October 1808. In pursuance of ministerial instructions from Paris, far from giving any help to Persia, Gardane even withdrew the two French officers, Verdier and Lamy, attached to the army of Prince Abbas Mirza. That was the breaking point for Persian patience. On the 23rd November 1808 the Shah called Gardane to an audience and told him plainly that unless the French came to his assistance by the end of January 1809, he would enter into negotiations with the English. Knowing the attitude of his own Government, Gardane started preparations for his departure. After the landing of the English envoy, Sir Harford Jones, at Bandar Abbas, the Shah again called Gardane to an audience. Gardane could yet give no definite assurance on behalf of the French, and the audience ended in an unpleasant note. On February 4, 1809 Jones was given permission to proceed to Teheran. On the 8th Gardane met the Shah and told him that he had decided to leave, keeping only two agents at Teheran for some time more.[1]

Gardane left Teheran on the 13th February. Fath Ali wrote a friendly letter to Napoleon on the 14th, making no mention of Gardane's departure. Immediately after he entered into negotiations with the English envoy and concluded a treaty, providing the same assurance against Russian aggression which he had previously sought from the French. Strangely enough, Napoleon was angry at Gardane's conduct. He wanted Gardane to remain at Teheran to observe developments, till at least he was driven out by the Shah. In a letter to the Shah Napoleon informed him that he had disgraced and dismissed Gardane from service for having left Teheran without permission, and that he would shortly send another ambassador. He also wrote that he appreciated the reasons which had induced the Shah to accept the English embassy. It may be noted here that the second ambassador from France was never sent, and Napoleon abandoned completely his Eastern projects.

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[1] They left Teheran in April 1809.

V. *The Capture of the Isles of France and Bourbon.*

The tangible result of the mission of General Gardane was to bring home to the English the importance of the land approaches to India and the necessity of guarding them through treaties of alliance with the Sikh ruler of the Punjab, the Amirs of Sind and Afghanistan and the Shah of Persia. English diplomacy was successful in sealing off the entire region to any future French attempt at penetration. In 1809 the French retained only the Isles of France and Bourbon and the doubtful prospect of getting assistance from their Dutch allies in Java. The English soon undertook the expulsion of the French from their last possessions in the East. Not that there was any apprehension of an attack from the French Isles, but their capture was necessary to put a stop to the activities of the privateers, who had inflicted so much damage to English trade and commerce. In fact, the English could have easily taken the islands during the Revolutionary War or after the resumption of hostilities in 1803. The real state of the islands was not altogether unknown to them. It is rather surprising therefore that in spite of heavy losses at the hands of the French privateers, the English did not undertake the capture of the Isles till 1810. The main reasons were,—the preoccupations of the English with affairs in India and the unwillingness of the home Government to authorise the Company's Government in India to undertake any expensive and distant expedition.

Wellesley was the first to conceive the project of sending an expeditionary force for the capture of Java and the French Isles. In 1800, soon after the fall of Tipu, Wellesley organised a force for the purpose from the armies of the three Presidencies. Trinkomali was chosen as the point of concentration for the force, and early in 1801 Major General David Baird was appointed to the command. But just at the moment the expedition was ready to start, it was diverted to Egypt to assist the army under Sir Ralph Abercromby, sent from England for

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the expulsion of the French.[1] Then again in July 1803, even before the news of the resumption of hostilities had reached Calcutta, Wellesley proposed to Castlereagh the plan of an offensive against the French in the Indian Ocean. He wanted the capture of two strategic points, the Cape by an expedition from England, and the Isles of France and Bourbon by an expedition from India.[2] The plan, particularly the attempt on the French Isles, did not receive much favourable consideration from the Government in London. Wellesley also soon found himself completely preoccupied with the Maratha war, and all that he could do for the time being was to approve Admiral Rainier's action in sending a small naval force to establish a regular blockade of the Isles. This was useful not only for the security of commerce, but also for collecting information about French plans and preparations in the Isles. The blockade, however, did not prove very effective for lack of any base near the Isles, and French privateers carried on their depredations as before.

Wellesley left India in 1805. His two successors, Cornwallis and Barlow, were much too occupied with arranging a political settlement after the Maratha war to pay any attention to external matters. When Minto arrived in 1807, he took up once more Wellesley's project. One part of the project, seizure of the Cape, had been effected already in January 1806 by an expeditionary force from England. There remained the capture of the French Isles and Java. But Minto had to wait for two years on account of the financial difficulties of the Company, the fear of disapproval by the British Cabinet of any action outside India, and the necessity of counteracting French intrigues in Persia, Afghanistan and Sind. He could merely continue the policy of a naval blockade of the Isles begun in 1804. The naval division sent to cruise off the islands was, however, too small to watch the numerous ports and prevent the ingress and egress of ships. Moreover, the cruise could last for only three months at a time, the nearest port facilities being available only in India and, since January 1806, at the Cape.

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[1] Martin—*Despatches, Minutes and Correspondence of the Marquess Wellesley,* II, pp. 440-450 (Wellesley to General Baird, 10th February 1801).

[2] *Ibid,* III. pp. 193-203 (Wellesley to Castlereagh, 25th July 1803).

From 1808 it became increasingly clear to the English that their ineffective blockade served no useful purpose. They must have a port of call near the French Isles, enabling them to maintain their blockade permanently. In the early part of 1809 Minto was authorised to send an expeditionary force to occupy the island of Rodriguez, about 300 miles to the east of the Isle of France, and from that base to maintain a permanent blockade of the Isles of France and Bourbon. Accordingly, in May 1809 a small expedition of 200 European troops and 200 sepoys under Colonel Keating was despatched from Bombay by the warship the *Belliqueux*. Rodriguez was inhabited by only three Frenchmen and 70 to 80 slaves, engaged in growing vegetables for the needs of the larger islands. The English occupied Rodriguez on the 4th August without any opposition, and landed large quantities of ships' stores and provisions. The island was converted into a depot for the refitting and revictualling of the blockading squadron.

The occupation of Rodriguez did not at once make the blockade of the French Isles fully effective. French ships could still sail in and out of the numerous ports in the islands, and, as the events of 1809-10 amply showed, they could still capture English vessels in Indian waters. But the occupation of Rodriguez had one tangible result. The English could now maintain a permanent naval watch on the Isles, and ascertain the real state of the French defences by landing demonstrations on the coasts. It revealed to them, what they had vaguely suspected, the real weakness of the French. Encouraged by the information received, the English sent reinforcements to Rodriguez to make an attempt at landing in the Isle of Bourbon and to test the French defences. The plan was conceived by Commodore Rowley, in charge of the blockading naval squadron, and his able lieutenant Corbett, commanding the frigate *Nereide,* and was approved by Vice-Admiral Bertie, commanding the English naval division at the Cape. On the 16th September 1809 an expeditionary force of 368 officers and men started from Rodriguez on board the *Nereide,* the *Otter* and a Company's cruiser the *Wasp*. These ships were joined on the 18th, off Port Louis in the Isle of France, by the *Raisonable* and the *Sirius*. The naval force was under the command of Rowley, while Keating was to lead the troops.

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Early in the morning of the 21st the English detachment, raised to about six hundred men by the addition of sailors and marines, was disembarked to the south of Point de Galotte, about seven miles from St. Paul, the chief town on the western coast. The French commandant at St. Paul, Saint-Mihiel was taken completely by surprise. The batteries defending the town were poorly manned, and no help could be expected in time from St. Denis, the capital, where General Bruslys, the Governor of the Island, had a very small force. Saint-Mihiel was so surprised by the English attack that he even forgot, until too late, to order the disembarkation of the 110 European troops on board the frigate *Caroline*, then anchored in the harbour. He, however, put up a very stubborn resistance till forced to capitulate. On the 22nd General Bruslys, when informed, disowned the capitulation, but immediately after, unnerved by the difficulties of the situation, he committed suicide. By the terms of the capitulation the English remained in possession of St. Paul for a few days and then started back for Rodriguez on the 2nd October, with all the captured public property of the town. They also took the French frigate, the *Caroline*, with her two prizes, the *Streatham* and the *Europe*, and a few small trading vessels.[1]

The activities of the English after the occupation of Rodriguez made Decaen realise that they were in earnest and ready for a final offensive against the Isles. Due to the indifference of the home Government, he was left with hopelessly inadequate resources to offer any resistance if the English attacked. Ever since the capture of the Cape by the English Decaen had been sending frantic appeals to the Minister Decrès for reinforcements. At the end of 1808 three frigates were sent from France, of which only one, the *Vénus*, under Hamelin, reached the Isle of France in March 1809, the other two being captured by the English. In May 1809 arrived another frigate, the *Bellone*, commanded by Duperré. Affairs on the Continent diverted the attention of Napoleon, and no further help was sent to Decaen. Needing troops for the defence of the Isles, Decaen issued a proclamation in August 1809, calling upon slave-holders to place a certain number of slaves at his disposal for recruitment in the army. But this order had to be withdrawn because of the opposition of the European population, who feared a general rising of the slaves if they were armed.[1]

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[1] C. R. O.—*The French in India* Series, Vol. I (B. I., P. VI, G): Letter from Colonel Keating about the capture of St. Paul.

It is curious to note that although the French had a few ships which could have assisted in the defence of the Isles, they were sent out to distant parts on commerce-raiding expeditions, even in 1809-10 when the English intentions about an attack on the Isles were getting clear. Thus it was that during the English attack on Rodriguez and St. Paul, all the French ships, with the exception of the frigate *Caroline*, were absent, giving the English an easy opportunity to land troops. The French ships returned at the beginning of 1810, and although there was an obvious ground to fear a return of the English to the Isle of Bourbon, three of the ships, the *Bellone*, the *Minerve* and the *Victor*, under the command of Duperré, were again sent out on a commerce-raiding mission in March 1810, while two others, the *Vénus* and the *Manche*, under the command of Hamelin, were sent to Port Louis for repairs. It was the very time when Minto, encouraged by the success of the raid on St. Paul, had decided to send reinforcements for a determined attack on the Isle of Bourbon, without waiting for orders from England. In March-April 1810 the English blockading squadron off the French Isles was reinforced by three ships from the Cape, the *Iphigenia*, the *Magicienne* and the *Nereide*, while Decaen received one new frigate from France, the *Astrée*.

It was in March 1810 that Minto decided on the expedition against the Isle of Bourbon.[2] As before, Keating and Rowley were to command the land and naval forces. Large reinforcements were sent from India, bringing the number of troops under Keating to 3,650 men, of whom nearly half were Europeans. Minto was confident of success, and sent at the same time Farquhar to assume charge as Governor of the Isle. The English reinforcements reached Rodriguez towards the end of June. On the 3rd July the expedition started, the destination being St. Denis, the capital of the Isle of Bourbon. In spite of adverse weather the English effected landings at three different points on the 7th and 8th July. Colonel Saint-Suzanne, Governor of the Isle, had under him 480 men in all, three-fourths being Créoles. He offered as stubborn a resistance as was possible under the circumstances, until forced to capitulate in the evening of the 8th. The island was made over to the English, with all the public property. The French troops surrendered as prisoners of war, to be transported to the Cape or to England. In appreciation of the brilliant defence the officers were allowed to keep their swords and military decorations. Saint-Suzanne was sent to the Isle of France on parole.[1]

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[1] Prentout—*L'Ile de France sous Decaen*, p. 540.

[2] Countess of Minto—*Lord Minto in India*, p. 243.

Although the English knew about the poor state of the defences of the French Isles, the ease with which the Isle of Bourbon was captured exceeded their expectations and emboldened them to start the offensive immediately against the Isle of France also, even before news of the earlier success had reached Calcutta and orders had been received from there. The watch on the Isle of France was tightened by a naval division under Commodore Pym, consisting of the *Nereide*, the *Sirius* and the *Staunch*, and attempts were made to explore landing spots on the coast. Finally, on the 13th August a small contingent was landed in the Isle de la Passe, about three miles from the mainland and commanding the entrance to the harbour of Grand Port, on the south-eastern coast of the Isle of France. The Isle de la Passe was easily captured and a small garrison of 130 men was left there. On the 20th August three French ships under Duperré, the *Bellone*, the *Minerve* and the *Victor*, with two captured English vessels, the *Windham* and the *Ceylon*, returned to Grand Port. They proceeded unsuspectingly as the Tricolour was flying from the fort in the Isle de la Passe and on a frigate lying off the island. But as soon as the French ships passed close to the island, they were fired upon from the fort and the frigate, both hoisting English colours. Duperré succeeded in reaching the port, with the loss of one prize, the *Windham*, captured by the English, and anchored in an advantageous position close to the shore and protected by coast battery.

On the 23rd came four English frigates, the *Sirius* (Capt.

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[1] Prentout—*L'Ile de France sous Decaen*, p. 556.

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Pym), the *Nereide* (Capt. Willoughby), the *Iphigenia* (Capt. Lambert) and the *Magicienne* (Capt. Curtis) to attack the French ships at anchor. For the French the position was desperate, but they decided to fight to save the honour of their flag. Decaen had just time to reinforce the crews of the ships with all the available seamen in the island and to strengthen the coast batteries. He also ordered the naval division under Hamelin at Port Louis, consisting of three frigates, the *Astrée*, the *Manche* and the *Vénus*, to proceed to Grand Port at once. But before Hamelin could arrive, the combat had started and the result practically decided. Two of the English frigates were sunk and one captured. The last remaining ship, the *Iphigenia*, and the garrison in the Isle de la Passe also surrendered on the arrival of Hamelin. The combat, which lasted from 23rd to 28th August, ended in a brilliant victory for the French.[1] With the exception of one frigate, the *Boadicea*, and two corvettes, the *Staunch* and the *Otter*, then lying at St. Paul in the Isle of Bourbon, the entire English blockading squadron had been annihilated. Sixteen hundred soldiers and sailors, including four Captains, Pym, Lambert, Willoughby and Curtis, had been taken prisoners. The Isle de la Passe had been recovered. Well might a French historian take pride in the achievement of his countrymen;[2] but there is much also in the explanation of an English historian that the English disasters were "ascribable to no deficiency of courage or conduct, but to an imperfect acquaintance with the scene of action, and the want of sufficiently experienced pilotage".[3]

The combat of Grand Port seemed a turning point for French fortunes. While of the English blockading squadron only one frigate remained, the *Boadicea*, the French now possessed seven frigates, including the *Iphigénie* captured from the English. Decaen was emboldened to think of taking the offensive. There were two plans before him,—to attack the island of Rodriguez which was the base of English operations and to intercept all ships proceeding to it; or to blockade the

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[1] Prentout—*L'Ile de France sous Decaen*, pp. 561-568.

[2] *Ibid*, pp. 568-569.

[3] Mill and Wilson—*History of British India*, Vol. VII, p. 333.

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Isle of Bourbon to starve the English garrison into submission and to capture the last English frigate lying at St. Paul. Ultimately, the second plan was adopted. But in spite of a few initial naval successes, the French attempt failed, as the English, determined to launch an immediate attack on the Isle of France, sent large reinforcements from India, and the naval force under Vice-Admiral Bertie at the Cape also arrived to co-operate in the attack. On the 12th the French captured an English frigate, the *Africaine,* just arrived from England, but soon after abandoned her to Rowley, who came up with the *Boadicea,* the *Staunch* and the *Otter.* On the 18th two French ships, the *Vénus* and the *Victor,* captured an English frigate, the *Ceylon,* which had on board General Abercromby sent from India to assume command of the expedition against the Isle of France. But this unexpected success was nullified the same day, as Rowley followed in pursuit with his three ships, inflicted a defeat on the French, and compelled Hamelin to surrender.

The second action of the 18th September ended the brief period of hope for the French. They had failed to make use of their temporary naval superiority. Early in October the arrival of Vice-Admiral Bertie in the frigate *Nisus,* indicating further reinforcements from the Cape, turned the scale definitely against the French. At the same time the French came to learn of large-scale troop concentrations in the island of Rodriguez, making it clear that the English were determined to launch an immediate attack on the Isle of France. The danger which Decaen had feared so long had actually come. With his few frigates and less than two thousand troops in all, he could hardly offer any resistance to a determined and large-scale invasion as planned by the English. At the end of 1809 Decaen had sent his aide-de-camp Barois again to warn the French Government of the desperate condition of the Isles and to urge the despatch of reinforcements. Barois reached France in February 1810, but met with total indifference from the Minister of Marine, Decrès. The Emperor too, busy with his marriage celebrations, had no time to think of a few distant colonies. It was not till June that Napoleon thought of sending some help to Decaen. He proposed to send 1500 troops and four or five frigates. But before the reinforcements could be sent, the plan was upset by the union of Holland and France in July and the consequent necessity of sending reinforcements for the protection of Java as well. There followed a long delay in maturing plans, while the time for action was passing away. All through July to December plans were drawn up and revised, but no help was actually sent.[1] It may be noticed here that even if Napoleon had wanted, it was not easy for him to send large-scale reinforcements, as all the French ports had been practically sealed by the British navy.

Thus Decaen was left to meet the approaching crisis with the resources actually at his disposal. Of the six frigates only one, the *Astrée,* was fit for service, the others requiring extensive repairs. He had about 900 officers and men in the army, besides 300 marines and artillerymen and 800 men belonging to the National Guard. The total at his disposal was thus only 2,000, but even of this number a considerable part consisted of Irishmen (prisoners of war induced to join the French service), on whose loyalty Decaen could not obviously count. There were no less than five suitable landing points on the coasts of the island. With his limited resources it was not possible for Decaen to arrange for a proper watch at all these points.

The same event, union of Holland and France, which delayed the despatch of reinforcements from France, decided the British Government and the Government of Calcutta to expedite sending an expedition first against the Isle of France and then against Java. It was to be a joint effort by forces from India and the Cape. General Abercromby and Vice-Admiral Bertie were to command the land and naval forces respectively. There was no time to be lost, since it was feared that reinforcements might soon be arriving from France. As Minto wrote to his wife on the 19th September 1810, "It is of great consequence therefore, that *we* should be at Port Louis to receive such supplies from France, rather than Monsieur De Caen".[2] We have noticed already how the chances of war had made General Abercromby a prisoner of the French and how he regained his freedom. A few days later Vice-Admiral Bertie arrived at St. Paul in the *Nisus* frigate. On the 14th

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[1] Prentout—*L'Ile de France sous Decaen,* pp. 584-587.

[2] Countess of Minto—*Lord Minto in India,* p. 245.

October he started with five ships to blockade Port Louis. He arrived off that port on the 19th, and leaving three ships there he started at once for Rodriguez in company with General Abercromby. On the way he fell in with the naval squadron from India under Rear-Admiral Drury. Bertie and Abercromby reached Rodriguez on the 3rd November. The division from Bombay had already arrived, and that from Madras reached on the 6th. On the 12th came the troops from the Isle of Bourbon, and on the 21st those from Bengal. Although the expected troops from the Cape had not yet arrived, Bertie and Abercromby determined not to wait any longer, for fear of losing the favourable season. On the 22nd the expedition started from Rodriguez. It consisted of twenty-one ships, besides transports, carrying 11.300 fighting men.

Early in the morning of the 29th November the English ships appeared off the selected point of landing, Grande Baye, near the north-east extremity of the island and fifteen miles north of the capital, Port Louis. The English ships, anchored in the narrow passage between a small island known as Coin de Mir and the mainland. It was known to be a very risky place for ships, because of the reefs which barred the entrance; and Decaen never expected that the English would attempt a landing there, particularly because the troops would have to pass through an impenetrable jungle for five miles before reaching the high road leading to Port Louis. He had anticipated an English landing at a point nearer Port Louis, whence the march to the capital would be easier. Thus the English troops landed in the afternoon of the 29th, quite unnoticed and unsuspected by the defenders. It was not till they had crossed the dense forest and reached the high road late at night that Decaen realised that his calculations had gone wrong. Before he could do anything the English were already on the march towards the capital on the 30th. The French fought heroically, trying to obstruct the progress of the English army towards Port Louis. It was obviously impossible for Decaen with two thousand men to resist a force of more than eleven thousand. On the 1st, as the English appeared before Port Louis, the French force retired within the town. The English ships also had taken up positions in the harbour, ready to cannonade the town from the sea. Realising that further resistance would only result in great suffering for the inhabitants of the town, Decaen sent a proposal for capitulation on the 2nd December, which was accepted on the 3rd with some modifications. The Isle of France was surrendered to the English, with all the ships in the harbours and all the public property. The French troops and crews of the ships were not to be treated as prisoners of war. They were to be transported to France with their arms and baggages by English ships. Decaen's original demand that the French frigates were not to be surrendered and that the French troops were to be transported to Europe on these frigates was not accepted by the English. Even then, it must be admitted, General Abercromby gave the French much better terms than were warranted by the military situation. It was partly due to a soldier's admiration for a brilliant defence by a hopelessly small force, and partly due to a desire to bring hostilities to a speedy end.

With the fall of the Isle of France disappeared the last vestige of French power in the East. That it was at all allowed to survive so long after the outbreak of the war in 1793 was due not to the strength of the French but to the hesitation and fears of the English to undertake an expedition against the Isles. As an English historian has observed, "Thus instantaneously disappeared the fancied strength of the Isle of France when once the vigour of British India emancipated itself from the visionary obstacles which the selfish fears of the British Cabinet had opposed, and the imperfect information of the Indian Government had encouraged."[1] At the same time it is quite permissible for a French historian to regret that "on the 2nd December 1810, the sixth anniversary of the crowning of Napoleon, the Captain-General of the Isle of France found himself compelled, by the neglect of the greatest Empire of the world, to surrender one of its most beautiful and important colonies".[2] For Decaen, in particular, the date of the capitulation, 3rd December, was specially significant. It was the ninth anniversary of the battle of Hohenlinden, the most glorious date in his military career.

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[1] Mill and Wilson—*History of British India*, Vol. VII, p. 342.

[2] Prentout—*L'Ile de France sous Decaen*, p. 610.

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Decaen returned to France on the 2nd April 1811 and was coldly received by the Emperor. A commission of enquiry was appointed to examine the causes of the loss of the Isle of France, but in the end Decaen was acquitted of all charges of negligence. Napoleon tried to make light of the loss of the Isle of France by putting in an official note in the *Moniteur*. It explained that the capture of the Isles of France and Bourbon was no real loss for France. These colonies had cost France 20 millions every year, with which ten ships of the line could be constructed. The colonies could be recaptured later, after France had built up a strong navy in five years. In the meantime the possession of the colonies would weaken England by necessitating a dispersion of her troops.[1] Well might an indignant French historian ridicule this note as a childish consolation, unworthy of a great man like Napoleon.[2]

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[1] Prentout—*L'Ile de France sous Decaen*, pp. 617-618.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 618.

CHAPTER XXI

THE RETURN OF THE FRENCH

In 1816 the French possessions in India were restored. The Peace Treaty of 30th May 1814 stipulated for the restitution of all the settlements and factories which France had possessed in India on the 1st January 1792. This was followed by a Commercial Convention, signed on the 7th March 1815. Before that, the Government of Louis XVIII had taken prompt measures to take possession of the settlements in India. A grand-nephew of Dupleix, General Joseph Desnos de Kerjean, was appointed to head the administration in India, and he reached Pondicherry on the 6th May 1815. But by that time the situation had changed by Napoleon's return to France, and there could be no question of restitution of territories. After the final defeat of Napoleon, the Peace Treaty of 20th November 1815 again provided for the restoration of French possessions in India, subject to the same conditions as laid down in the earlier treaty. The French were not to fortify any of their settlements, nor to maintain troops beyond the requirements of police duty. They were also to recognise English sovereignty over the Indian possessions of the East India Company. On the same day was signed in London a Convention settling the details of the execution of the treaty and completing in a way the Commercial Convention of 7th March 1815.

After the treaty of 20th November 1815 the French Government made new arrangements for the administration of the Indian settlements. In place of the military type of government, headed by General Kerjean, which had been decided upon after the treaty of 1814, was substituted the old type of civil administration under a Governor and an Intendant. In April 1816 Comte Dupuy and Joseph Dayot were appointed Governor and Intendant respectively and also Royal Commissioners for taking possession of the settlements and factories in India.[1] They started from France in two frigates, the *Amphi-*

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[1] P.A. ms. 5384 (Royal Instructions for Comte Dupuy, dated 9th May 1816).

trite and the *Licorne,* and reached Pondicherry on the 27th September 1816. Comte Dupuy at once proceeded to Madras to settle with the Governor details of the procedure of restitution of territories. The Government of Madras issued a proclamation on the 21st October, calling upon all English subjects to leave the territories to be returned to the French.[1] A second proclamation of the 18th November declared that Pondicherry and its dependencies had been restored to the French that day.[2] Captain James Stuart Fraser was appointed as English Commissioner at Pondicherry to settle any differences which might arise in connection with the restoration of territories. On the 4th December Fraser issued a proclamation that the territories had been finally handed over to the French.[3] On the same day the French flag was hoisted at Pondicherry, and the French celebrated their return by a grand ceremony. It is interesting to note that in connection with the restitution of Pondicherry nothing was said on either side, unlike as in the case of the other settlements, about the exact limits of the territories returned to the French.

The settlement of Chandernagore was restored on the 16th December 1816.[4] Denis Dayot, brother of Joseph Dayot took possession of the settlement from Gordon Forbes, representing the Governor-General. Along with the principal settlement, the French were also entitled under the terms of the treaties and conventions of 1814 and 1815 to take possession of the subordinate factories at Kasimbazar, Dacca, Jougdia, Patna and Balasore. The French Government was at first inclined to attach some importance to their recovery, and even sent out Chiefs to take charge of these minor trading posts. But when it appeared that the old buildings were completely in ruins and that the administrative costs would far exceed the profits from the small amount of trade that could be carried on there, the French abandoned the idea of taking possession of these factories. Only the factory at Balasore was occupied for a short period.[5] On the 14th January 1817 Comte de Beranger took possession of Karikal with all its dependencies from the

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[1] P.A. ms. 5393.

[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 5400.

[3] *Ibid.*, ms. 5409.

[4] *Ibid.*, ms. 6272.

[5] *Ibid.*, ms. 6340.

Collector of Tanjore, John Thackeray.[1] Mahé was restored to the French on the 22nd January 1817. The Captain of the *Amphitrite*, Philibert, took possession of the settlement from Vaughan, Collector of Malabar. In the case of this settlement only there was some dispute between the parties, the French claiming large territories which they possessed in 1792, by virtue of the cessions made by Tipu and by the neighbouring Nayar Princes, and the English refusing to hand over anything more than the town of Mahé[2]. The factory at Calicut was restored on the 1st February 1819 and that at Surat in June 1819. Finally, the settlement of Yanam and the factory at Masulipatam were also returned to the French early in 1817.

The French could at last return to India after nearly a quarter of a century. But they came back under circumstances altogether different from what had existed in 1792. By the clear stipulations of the treaties of 1814 and 1815, relating to fortifications and maintenance of troops, their settlements in India ceased to have any political importance whatsoever. The dreams of Dupleix completely faded away, as the French had to accept the new situation, in which there was not the least possibility of a political rivalry with the English. The French possessions in India were to remain as a few small, scattered and undefended territories, lying entirely at the mercy of the English. It was, however, not only the military stipulations of the treaties of 1814 and 1815 which altered the position of the French. What was equally or perhaps more important was the change in the political situation in India during the interval from 1793 to 1816, brought about by the rapid expansion and consolidation of English power over almost the entire sub-continent. The territories under direct English rule had increased beyond all recognition, and all the Indian Powers with whom the French had maintained diplomatic contacts before had been brought into the system of Subsidiary Alliance established by Wellesley. By the time the French came back to India in 1816, the English position had become so firmly consolidated that not even the boldest optimist among the French could dream of shaking it. Indeed, it was only because the French realised this fact and agreed to accept their new situation as final that their few scattered and undefended possessions were allowed to survive till the end of the British rule in India. Again, it was the realisation of the futility of holding on to a few isolated pockets against the will of the new Government of independent India, inheriting the position and treaty rights of the earlier Government, that led to the final departure of the French and the transfer of their possessions to the Indian Union.

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[1] P. A. ms. 6349.

[2] *Ibid.*, ms. 6636.

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With the return of the French in 1816 ends the long story of Anglo-French rivalry in India narrated in the preceding pages. If the task of the historian be merely to tell the story, nothing further need be said. But perhaps at this point a few observations on the historical importance of the subject matter of the story may not be wholly out of place and considered as an infliction on readers. The real importance of the Anglo-French rivalry in the 18th century lay in the new turn it gave to India's political destiny. The prolonged struggle for power between two European nations was mainly instrumental in bringing India into close contact with the West, with all the consequences which followed from it. One of these consequences, the political domination of India by a European Power, had absorbed the attention of historians and politicians so much that other results of the contact, historically more significant and durable, were frequently overlooked. Perhaps, this was inevitable, as long as India remained under foreign political subjection. Now that the chapter of Western domination, after all a very short one in the context of India's long history, has come to a close, and both the nations who fought for supremacy in India have been forced by circumstances to leave the scene of their earlier conflict, it is possible for us to take a more balanced view of the results of India's contact with the West. That is why the time is now appropriate to re-tell the story of Anglo-French rivalry in India, not as an isolated event, but as the starting point of that historical process through which India could become a part of the ONE WORLD.

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Union. The first complete *Inventaire* of the Pondicherry records, useful to scholars, was made by Martineau in 1914. Later an even more useful work was done by Gaudart, who made an admirable Catalogue of the large mass of old manuscripts. This Catalogue, published in eight volumes by the *Société de l'Histoire de l'Inde Française,* Pondicherry, is indeed of inestimable value to every one interested in the history of the French in India. Curiously enough, few of the records in the Pondicherry collection relate to the period before 1765, and thus those who are interested in the beginnings of the French Settlements and the most dramatic phase of Anglo-French rivalry in India could find practically nothing there. On the other hand, nearly five-sixths of the Pondicherry records deal with the period 1765 to 1816. In fact, for this particular period the collection of manuscripts at Pondicherry was almost complete for a detailed study, with only a few important gaps. Thus, for the present work, undertaken long before the transfer of the Archives to France, Pondicherry records supplied the major part of the materials, only supplemented at places by records preserved in other Archives.

It is hardly possible to give here a detailed reference to all the relevant records in the old Pondicherry Archives. Fuller and specific references have been given in the foot-notes of the text. All that is necessary here is to indicate broadly the subjects covered by the records in the Pondicherry collection. That will at least show the extent of materials which were available there and the major gaps that had to be filled up from other sources.

(i) the restitution of French Settlements and Factories in India in 1765; their internal history, administration, defence, commerce etc.; relations with the Indian Powers and the English; capture by the English in 1778-79.
with the Indian Powers.
(ii) the same, for the period 1785 to 1793; no records, however, about the Isles of France and Bourbon.
and of the Commandants of the different Settlements
(iii) Anglo-French commercial disputes.
(iv) Correspondence of the Governors of Pondicherry

(v) Political *mémoires* and projects for reviving French influence in India.

(vi) the war of 1778—1783 and the eighteen months' negotiations in India for the execution of the Peace treaty; correspondence of Bussy with the Ministers in France, de Suffren, Macartney, Indian Princes and French agents at various Darbars; no records, however, about the naval actions of de Suffren.

(vii) *mémoires* and correspondence of French diplomatic agents and military adventurers (Montigny, de Lallée, Aumont, Raymond, Piron, Modave); important omissions being papers relating to the diplomatic activities of Chevalier, Gentil, Madec and Saint-Lubin.

(viii) the revolutionary movements in the different French Settlements in India, 1791—1793.

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